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DRAGON®

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DRAGON®

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ON THE COVER: *What's cooler than an illustration of a large, angry treant? An illustration of a large, angry treant smashing through legions of hobgoblins, as shown in Chris Seaman's cover piece.*

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The Fire-eyed Maid of Smoky War

By Steve Winter

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;
Or close the wall up with our English dead.

If we are mark'd to die, we are enow
To do our country loss; and if to live,
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.

Lay on, Macduff,
And damn'd be him that first cries, "Hold, enough!"

Fight, gentlemen of England! fight, bold yeomen!
Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head!
Spur your proud horses hard, and ride in blood;
Amaze the welkin with your broken staves!

War is our nominal theme this month, and no one does war like Will Shakespeare.

Once upon a time, war was seen as a great adventure. We know better now—mostly—but it isn't only us that's changed. War itself is different.

Before it became a 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year industry, war was intermittent. Soldiers spent most of a campaign marching from place to place, standing guard, tending to gear and animals, foraging for supplies, and occasionally skirmishing with their opposing numbers who were up to the same things. If the camp wasn't ravaged by dysentery, malaria, food poisoning, or a hundred other maladies, if the weather wasn't too wet or dry or hot or cold, if the countryside wasn't stripped of forage, and if the commanding general wasn't an idiot or a drunkard—big ifs, for sure—then being at war could be easier on soldiers than on civilians.

Until the day of battle, that is. That could be an ugly day for everyone, but especially for the losers. The idea that any enemy—man, woman, or child—should be left alive is a relatively recent advance in civilization. We have a long and ghastly relationship with slaughtering everything that breathes, and only a few centuries of practice at clemency.

When war makes the jump to movies, to young adult adventure books, and to D&D, we strip out most of the horror and instead shine a spotlight on the hero who shouts, "Sound trumpets! Let our bloody colours wave! And either victory, or else a grave." We can do that because the grave is only make-believe, while our thrill at imagined danger and our admiration for courage are real.

War isn't the only thing on our minds, though. We also have fresh looks at hobgoblins and bladelings, an evolutionary new development in living spells, the secret location of the lost Harhund mine, and the lore of the first magical weapons ever fabricated.

Oh, and one other thing: I'm delighted to be back in the saddle here at *Dragon* and *Dungeon* online. The next few months look very exciting.

Sentient Living Spells

Magic with a Mind of its Own

By Doug Hyatt and Robert J. Schwalb

Illustrations by Mark Winters

From sheets of roiling flame to spheres of crackling lightning, from howling snowstorms to clouds of flying daggers, living spells haunt the blighted landscape of the Mournland. Remnants of the apocalypse that destroyed the nation of Cyre, these magical effects chase any prey foolish enough to cross their paths.

Most living spells encountered in the Mournland, although technically alive, have little in the way of motivation; they do not eat, sleep, or breathe, and, other than being drawn to pockets of arcane magic, they exhibit no behavior other than sheer aggression.

A few living spells behave in unusual ways. They avoid conflict, make efforts to communicate, and even gather in small communities. These living spells stand apart from others, because they have an attribute that no ordinary spell possesses: sentience.

Arcane Powers Given Life

Years ago, a magical catastrophe leveled the nation of Cyre and reduced its territory to a haunted wasteland now known as the Mournland. The cause of this event remains unknown to the people of Khorvaire, and the bleak and twisted landscape casts a shadow across the entire continent for fear that it might happen again. The Last War, a century-long conflict responsible for the fall of the Kingdom of Galifar, sputtered to a halt. Whatever magical force swept away the nation's citizens and reduced its land to a poisonous desert was the same force that created one of the deadliest threats to those who dare brave these lands—the living spells.

All living spells are arcane powers given life, becoming entities in their own right. A spell's essential function gives definition to a living spell, determining its form, its capabilities, and the methods it uses to destroy any living thing it encounters. From the dreaded living cloudkill, with its heavy poisonous mist creeping across the broken landscape, to the spinning and clashing living cloud of daggers, a storm of blades made from magical force, nearly all living spells present grave danger to those caught unprepared.

Living spells have few common features because they evolved from powers used by those who study the arcane traditions, and arcane magic varies from one user to the next. What they do share is the magical nature they retained after their creation. They have no need for food, water, sleep, or any other basic need of living creatures. They do not reproduce and have little affinity for others of their kind, though circumstance can throw them together. They are dangerous and violent, hurling their undulating masses against anything they find.

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Communication

Their heightened intelligence and self-awareness makes it possible for sentient living spells to communicate with each other and sometimes with other creatures. These creatures can hear others and can learn languages, as evidenced in their understanding of Common and other tongues—but although all sentient living spells have the intellectual capacity to communicate, many lack the means to do so in a reliable fashion. A sentient spell's physical form lacks the necessary organs to produce speech, so these creatures often rely on unconventional methods to exchange ideas.

The communication method of a particular sentient living spell depends on its nature. Some spells develop complex lexicons based on changing their colors, their forms, and the sounds they make. Other sentient living spells, even those of different natures, can easily interpret these messages and often replicate them. The ease with which they communicate with each other does not, however, extend to exchanges with other creatures. Such creatures have to first recognize that a spell's odd behavior is some form of communication and then have the wherewithal to deduce the intent from the display. Since not everyone has the patience or perceptiveness to understand these facts, encounters with humanoids and other beings often do not end well for those creatures, even if the contact began with peaceful intentions on the part of the living spell.

For example, a sentient living spell that evolved from *color spray* or *hypnotic pattern* might communicate through flashing colored lights or displays of swirling hues. A different illusion-based spell might alter its appearance and shape in specific ways, communicating through images that best describe the information it hopes to share. Some sentient spells can develop rudimentary speech if the original spell had an auditory aspect, such as *ghost sound* or *focused sound*.

Other sentient spells use more direct methods of communication. A sentient living animate dead, for example, could animate a corpse and use its vocal cords to speak. A living bewitching gaze could dominate a creature and speak through it.

Getting Along with Others

With sentience comes an existential crisis. Sudden awareness of self, place, and identity result in myriad questions. Finding no reliable answers in themselves, sentient living spells set out to find others of their kind. And when many gather, they might, in time, form societies.

Three significant groups of sentient living spells have emerged in the Mournland—the Builders, the Teachers, and the Annihilators, all of which are described in the following section.

Few sentient living spells have use for the religions of other species. Many of these entities believe they are all fragments of a single Great Spell, which, after becoming angered at humans' pathetic efforts to control it, struck down the vain nation of Cyre. In accomplishing this deed, the Great Spell shattered into many pieces that became the individual living spells. Worshipers of the Great Spell seek to gather and unite all living spells, and they believe the magic that empowers each could one day allow them to join and recreate the Great Spell.

Sentient living spells view mundane living spells in much the same way that humans view animals. Some sentient spells hunt them for sustenance, others gather and protect them in the belief that they will one day be joined to re-form the Great Spell, and others still keep them for labor, companions, guards, and sport.

Other races are of little interest to most sentient living spells. Humanoids and other creatures are seen as interlopers, meddlers, and thieves, and thus explorers and adventurers might be subject to suspicion or even hostility from sentient spells. A few more enlightened spells venture out into the world, either in borrowed vessels or in their native form, to get a better understanding of the world in which they live.

Factions

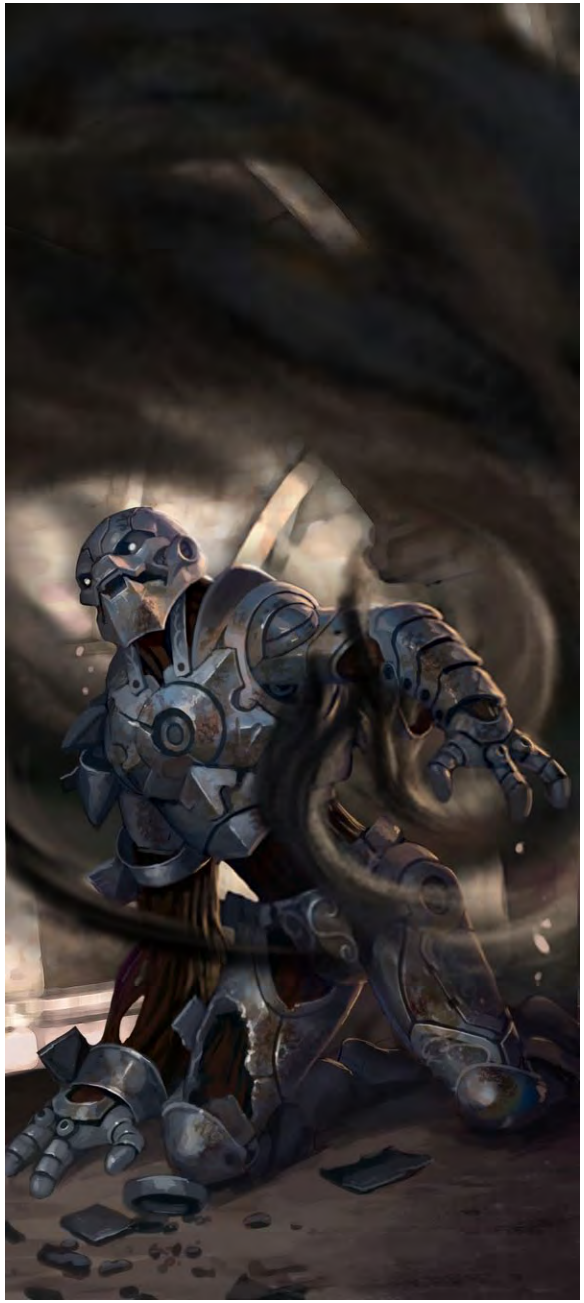
Three major societies of sentient living spells have formed since the Day of Mourning.

The Builders

The most gregarious, curious, and industrious of the sentient living spells are the Builders, so named for their desire to build a place for themselves in the Mournland, to become a true people with a culture, a civilization, and a purpose beyond survival. Living spells that identify themselves as Builders arise from the same spells used to create warforged, to animate objects, and to create and control other constructs. In their native form they appear as streams of dark mist, either black or gray. These spells awoke in the aftermath of the great cataclysm and roamed the mist-filled wasteland as clouds of black energy, scouring the landscape for constructs to inhabit. The warforged remains that littered the old battlefields proved to be suitable vessels.

Most Builders can enter and animate only a dead warforged body. A few can dominate even a living warforged. When the ebon stream of a Builder occupies the body of a slain construct, the warforged seemingly returns to life, its eyes aglow once more.

Travelers and Explorers: Animating the remains of a warforged provides a Builder with many advantages. It can use the body's sturdy form to work, repair, and create. Through its physiology, the Builder can speak. Best of all, Builders that occupy warforged



Builder **Level 5 Lurker**
Medium aberrant magical beast (blind, ooze) XP 200

HP 54; **Bloodied** 27 **Initiative** +7
AC 19, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16 **Perception** +3
Speed 5 in warforged form; Blindsight 10
0, fly 6 (hover) in ooze form
Immune blinded, disease, gaze effects, poison

Traits

Insubstantial
In ooze form, the Builder takes half damage from any damage source, except force damage and psychic damage. Whenever the Builder takes psychic damage, it loses this trait until the start of its next turn.

Ooze
While squeezing in ooze form, the Builder moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.

Regeneration
While in warforged form, the Builder regains 5 hit points whenever it starts its turn and has at least 1 hit point. When the Builder takes force or psychic damage, the regeneration does not function on the creature's next turn.

Standard Actions

⊕ Slam ✦ At-Will
Requirement: The Builder must be in warforged form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage.

⊕ Psychic Touch (psychic) **✦ At-Will**
Requirement: The Builder must be in ooze form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Will
Hit: 3d6 + 2 psychic damage.

† Animate Objects ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature carrying equipment); +8 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d10 + 4 damage, and the target's equipment animates (save ends). While the target's equipment is animated, the target is slowed and takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

† Possess Warforged ✦ At-Will
Requirement: The Builder must be in ooze form.
Effect: Melee 1 (the intact body of one dead warforged); the Builder's ooze form disappears into the target, and the Builder takes on warforged form.

Minor Actions

Leave Body ✦ At-Will
Requirement: The Builder must be in warforged form.
Effect: The warforged body the Builder occupied falls prone in the Builder's space, and the Builder takes on ooze form and shifts up to 2 squares.

Triggered Actions

Fleeing Ooze ✦ Encounter
Trigger: While in warforged form, the Builder is first bloodied.
Effect (Free Action): The Builder uses *leave body*, gains 10 temporary hit points, and the warforged body it inhabited turns to dust.

Skills Arcana +9, Diplomacy +7
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 18 (+6) **Int** 15 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+2)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common

bodies can travel in a form that lets them interact with other peoples and learn more about the world in which they have found themselves. Builders explore the world, learning all they can from the people and creatures they meet. As a group, they know a wide range of languages and customs, and they are hungry for lore about architecture, the arts, magic, history, and anything else they can learn. After a time, each possessed warforged returns to the Builder community and shares the knowledge it has learned.

False Warforged: Builders that inhabit warforged bodies can pass for living warforged in most places. Most people of the world, especially those in rural communities, consider warforged strange and alien to begin with, so if the awkward behavior of a Builder is close enough to the way a living warforged acts, the Builder's true nature might go unrealized. Anyone who has lived, fought, and worked alongside warforged might pick up on the difference right away, as do other warforged. More experienced Builders learn to disguise themselves better, but there's no escaping the fact that the bodies they inhabit are merely puppets, and insightful individuals have little trouble seeing through this deception. For this reason,

Builders do not stay in one place for very long so that they can avoid arousing suspicion.

Strange Edifices: Travelers in the Mournland have reported finding bizarre structures rising from the blasted terrain—buildings made from iron, stone, glass, and a variety of other materials, with no pattern or apparent logic in their design. Stairways lead nowhere, mazes of tiny corridors connect vast chambers, and organic shapes cut from crystal gleam with mysterious light. The structures embody a myriad of architectural styles, fused together to make something new.

The Builders are responsible for these works and raise them up using whatever materials they can find. They do not build them for shelter or to serve any functional purpose other than to express themselves and represent or contain the knowledge they have acquired. Many Builders, freed from the vessels they inhabit, stream through the twisting passages in their native form, savoring the pleasure and the security of what they have built.

Encounters: Builders can be encountered in the bodies of warforged, or in their native forms as floating clouds of black mist. In warforged form, they might be lone travelers or accompanied by other creatures. Builders who accompany other creatures in warforged form are highly skilled at hiding their true nature, so when one streams out of its host body, that event is often a surprise to its companions.

Sample Builder: The Builder presented here was once a spell that animated objects.

Builders in Combat: Builders avoid violent confrontation when possible. They prefer to use words to settle disputes rather than brute force. When compelled to fight, a Builder controls its warforged body with great skill, slamming opponents and tangling them up in their gear. A Builder typically stays in warforged form long enough to drive off its foes or to escape. If a Builder's warforged body is severely damaged, the Builder slips away in a stream of smoke, fleeing by the safest available route until it can find a new body to inhabit.

The Teachers

In the Last War, arcanists frequently used magic to spy on their enemies. Some of that magic survived Cyre's destruction in the form of sentient living spells. Just as the wizards did in the Last War, these spells hunger for knowledge, often retaining many of the mental characteristics of the individuals who cast them. Their natural inquisitiveness contributes to their near obsession with uncovering the source of the destruction that created the Mournland, learning why they were made and how they gained sentience, and, above all, how to help other living spells gain sentience. Their efforts so far have involved seeking lost lore, artifacts, and relics from Cyre, hoping something in them will give them the answers they seek.

These sentient living spells call themselves the Teachers because they work to instruct other living spells in how to awaken to sentience and to spread word about the Great Spell they strive to restore.

The Glass Plateau: A shimmering plain dotted with crystalline rock formations that jut from its surface rises from the heart of the Mournland. Pockets of wild spell energy bubble up here, drawing living spells from all over the wastes to this place. The Teachers believe that the magical power may be tied in some way to the mystery of the cataclysm. For this reason, the Teachers have established a settlement at the Glass Plateau and have begun carving out tunnels and venturing into the depths to discover what lies below. Progress has been slow due to the discovery of strange magical barriers and hazards that can unravel living spells, destroying them instantly. If the Teachers would uncover the secrets that they are certain lie beneath them, they must gain the aid of other people and creatures.

Natural Magicians: Teachers have qualities not possessed by other living spells. They can memorize the text of scrolls and tomes and can recite the words (if they can speak) or communicate the message using a language of flashing lights that only other Teachers can understand. In addition, most Teachers develop magical abilities beyond the spell that gave them life, and many know several cantrips. They put these cantrips to great use, using *mage hand* to manipulate objects, or *ghost sound* to speak.

A New Religion: Some Teachers act as priests. They espouse the theory that all living spells are fragments of a single powerful sorcery known as the Great Spell. The Teachers believe the Great Spell is mightiest of living spells to have ever existed, a magic so powerful that wizards of the Last War sought to tame it in order to bring victory to their side. Some Teachers assert that the Great Spell was responsible for the Mournland's creation, as it struck out to punish the wizards and sorcerers for their hubris. Doing so, however, shattered itself into many pieces—pieces that would become the living spells. Although many Teachers already believe these stories with unwavering certainty, they also hope that what's buried beneath the Glass Plateau will give them the proof and the means that they need to unite all sentient living spells.

Central to this growing religious movement is the goal of recombining all living spells to restore the Great Spell. To this end, Teachers see themselves as shepherds, with ordinary living spells as their flock. They capture, herd, and contain living spells atop the Glass Plateau so they can be preserved until the day when the Great Spell can be re-formed. The Teachers have made great strides in this area, but have run up against opposition from the Annihilators, who cannibalize other living spells in order to increase their own strength.

Universal Potential: The Teachers believe that all living spells have the potential to become sentient. They subject captive living spells to all manner of magical effects they have learned, hoping to unlock

Teacher **Level 2 Controller**
Medium aberrant magical beast (blind, ooze) XP 125

HP 38; **Bloodied** 19 **Initiative** +2
AC 16, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 12 **Perception** +1
Speed 0, fly 6 (hover) Blindsight 10
Immune blinded, disease, gaze effects, poison

Traits

Arcane Insight
The Teacher rolls all Arcana checks twice and takes the higher result.

Insubstantial
The Teacher takes half damage from any damage source, except force damage and psychic damage. Whenever the Teacher takes psychic damage, it loses this trait until the start of its next turn.

Ooze
While squeezing, the Teacher moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.

Standard Actions

Psychic Touch (psychic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Will
Hit: 2d6 + 3 psychic damage, and the Teacher can slide the target 1 square.

Ghost Sound (illusion) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Ranged 10 (one object or unoccupied square); the Teacher causes a sound as quiet as a whisper or as loud as a yelling or fighting creature to emanate from the target.

Storm of Possibilities (psychic) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Close burst 1 (enemies in the burst); +5 vs. Will
Hit: 1d4 + 3 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Skills Arcana +9, History +9
Str 10 (+1) **Dex** 12 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+1)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 17 (+4) **Cha** 11 (+1)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** understands Common

the consciousness they believe lurks inside the creature. Despite their efforts, they have yet to awaken a single living spell.

Encounters: The Teachers treat peacefully with creatures they encounter when they can, and flow away from those who intend them harm. Adventurers who find the Glass Plateau are welcomed by the Teachers, which express interest in whatever magical treasures the characters might carry. The Teachers have acquired many magic relics from their scouring of the Mournland, and thus they often have a surplus of magic items for trade. The Teachers are interested only in items that can help them tame the captured living spells or uncover the secrets they know lie below. Adventurers who seek a particular prize but have nothing of value to trade can strike a deal for that prize in exchange for undertaking an expedition into the tunnels below the Glass Plateau—an endeavor that has spelled the end of many an incautious explorer.

Sample Teacher: Teachers are evolved from spells designed to gather information, to spy on far places, and to make predictions about the future. This Teacher evolved from an *arcane insight* spell.

Teachers in Combat: Every living spell that is lost or destroyed diminishes the Teachers and their work to restore the Great Spell. Teachers flee confrontation, preferring to lure attackers into magic traps, hazards, and other monsters when possible. If cornered, they warp their magical nature, buffeting their foes with psychic assaults.

The Annihilators

Most living spells rose amid the slaughter of thousands on the battlefield, and the battle spells cast in those final moments cling to the purpose for which they were made: destruction. Sentience did little to dampen these spells' enthusiasm for slaughter and actually gave the spells new ways to hunt down and kill their prey. Among these ruthless spells, the most dangerous perceived an even greater purpose: to continue the destruction that created the Mournland and spread it to all of Eberron.

Known as the Annihilators, these sentient living spells have a society of opportunity, one suited to the harsh reality of the Mournland. Might makes right. Only the strong survive, and the weak deserve subjugation or death. When two Annihilators meet for the first time, they inevitably battle to prove which of them is stronger. These contests are seldom fought to the death, for the Annihilators would rather enslave other sentient living spells than reduce the number of their own kind. Annihilators measure each other's power and status by the number of sentient living spells they have bound. A living spell

Annihilator **Level 18 Brute**
Large aberrant beast (blind, ooze) XP 2,000

HP 212; **Bloodied** 106 **Initiative** +16
AC 30, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 29 **Perception** +14
Speed 8 Blindsight 10
Immune acid, blinded, disease, gaze effects, poison

Traits

Insubstantial
The Annihilator takes half damage from any damage source, except force damage and psychic damage. Whenever the Annihilator takes psychic damage, it loses this trait until the start of its next turn.

Ooze
While squeezing, the Annihilator moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.

Standard Actions

Caustic Slam (acid) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 15 acid damage, and ongoing 10 acid damage (save ends).

Acid Rain (acid) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +21 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 15 acid damage, and ongoing 10 acid damage (save ends).

Corrosive Wave (acid) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in the blast); +21 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6 + 15 acid damage, and ongoing 10 acid damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends).

Str 14 (+11) **Dex** 25 (+16) **Wis** 21 (+14)
Con 22 (+15) **Int** 14 (+11) **Cha** 10 (+9)
Alignment evil **Languages** understands Common, telepathy 5

with a large collection of spell slaves is a force to be reckoned with.

Allies in Destruction: Annihilators work with the Lord of Blades and his warforged army, because they share a common goal—to bring about the end of all mortal life. The Annihilators despise other sentient living spells, seeing their objectives as being at odds with their own.

Power from Consumption: The Annihilators alone among living spells can consume arcane magic to increase their power. They hunt living spells for sport, in much the same way that a human would flush out and chase a wild boar. Annihilators hunt in packs as a group of wolves might, with the strongest leading the pack and consuming the majority of the prey's magical energy, leaving a little to feed the lesser members.

Mind to Mind: Along with all the spells they consume, Annihilators acquire some of the mental traits of their victims. Perhaps as a result of this expanded consciousness, Annihilators have developed telepathic abilities. They use telepathy to taunt their victims, hounding them with the mad whispers of the Annihilator pack.

Superior Forms: The Annihilators see humanoids as weak and unworthy of attention. Unless another creature impresses an Annihilator with its strength and skill, the living spell is unlikely to bother communicating with the creature. Arcane spellcasters, such as bards, wizards, and sorcerers, are exceptions. Annihilators see them as food sources and attack without mercy to consume them as they would any living spell. A powerful spellcaster can sometimes master an Annihilator, compelling its service after defeating it. Such service lasts only as long as the spellcaster appears powerful enough to maintain the situation.

Encounters: Annihilators hunt in packs, their telepathic whispers eating at the minds of the creatures they pursue. A wizard or a sorcerer might lead (or become subjugated into) an Annihilator pack. Annihilators sometimes ally with warforged that are in service to the Lord of Blades. Otherwise, these living spells do not usually form alliances with other creatures.

Sample Annihilator: These sentient living spells always evolve from attack spells. The Annihilator described here is based on the *acid wave* spell.

Annihilators in Combat: An Annihilator flows toward its foe, its mocking laughter echoing in its victim's thoughts. From its shuddering form, it launches glistening droplets that chew their way through armor and flesh. When enemies converge to fight back, it rises up and crashes down on top of them with its *corrosive wave*.

NPC Companion: Living Storm Pillar

Sometimes, a sentient living spell allies with humanoid creatures. The spell might be curious about the world beyond the Mournland, but fears traveling alone in unfamiliar lands. Or, having failed to find another sentient spell, it might seek out companionship from anyone it meets who can understand it.

The companion described here was once a *storm pillar* spell. The player characters might befriend this creature during a foray into the Mournland. A living storm pillar appears as a tiny spark of electricity that crackles as it flits from ally to ally. In battle, it expands into a fearsome pillar of lightning. Sentient living storm pillars most likely associate themselves with the Builders, and thus seek knowledge they might bring back to aid other living spells in the Mournland. A living storm pillar understands Common, but it cannot speak; it communicates by making electrical buzzing and hissing noises.

Living Storm Pillar **Level 1 Striker**
Small aberrant magical beast (blind, ooze)

HP 24; **Bloodied** 12; **Healing Surges** 7 — **Initiative** +3
AC 16, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14 — **Perception** +0
Speed 0, fly 5 — Blindsight 5
Immune blinded, disease, gaze effects, lightning, poison

Traits

Storm Pillar (lightning) ✦ **Aura** 1
Any enemy that willingly enters a square in the aura takes 5 lightning damage. A creature can take this damage only once per turn.

Insubstantial
The pillar takes half damage from any damage source, except force damage and psychic damage. Whenever the pillar takes psychic damage, it loses this trait until the start of its next turn.

Ooze
While squeezing, the pillar moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.

Standard Actions

Arc Lightning (lightning) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d6 + 3 lightning damage.

Str 8 (-1)	**Dex** 16 (+3)	**Wis** 11 (+0)
Con 12 (+1)	**Int** 10 (+0)	**Cha** 10 (+0)

Alignment unaligned — **Languages** understands Common

About the Authors

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Winning Races:
Hobgoblins

By Jim Auwaerter

Illustration by Jason Juta

Hobgoblins exemplify the dark side of civilization, where adherence to the law is more important than justice. They expand their power through military conquest wherever they can, and they have little care for the fate of those swept aside or crushed underfoot. Though it can be easy to disdain or even hate the hobgoblins for their excesses, their immorality is tempered by pragmatism that keeps them from plunging into absolute evil.

Because hobgoblins are the most intelligent and civilized of goblinkind, a few of them suppress or deny their baser urges and embark on adventuring careers. This article explores the use of hobgoblins as player characters in a campaign.

Physical Qualities

Hobgoblins stand slightly taller than humans, though their military bearing makes them appear to tower over others more than their actual height would suggest. Hobgoblins are also more likely to wear heavier armor even when out of combat, giving them a stocky appearance. Their skin tone varies from dark yellow to brown, with brick-red or orange coloring being most common. Their hair is black or dark brown, and it frequently begins to go gray by the age of 30. Many hobgoblin males cultivate well-trimmed beards, though few grow mustaches with them.

Hobgoblin ears are long, pointed, and mobile. Although most hobgoblins have good control of their facial expressions, giving them a reputation for being emotionless, it's harder for them to keep their ears from lying back when they are upset or angry. Their shining yellow eyes and overdeveloped canines give them a wolflike appearance.

Hobgoblin males are taller and broader than females, but both sexes are capable of sustained physical activity. Hobgoblins can march for 20 miles per day over rough terrain for a week and still arrive in fighting condition at the end.

Hobgoblins' lives are slightly shorter than those of humans. Few hobgoblins live to be much older than seventy, and the rare hobgoblin who reaches eighty years or more is considered venerable and favored by luck and the gods.

Hobgoblin Discipline Hobgoblin Racial Utility

You steel yourself against a harmful effect, and that malady disappears.

Encounter
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You start your turn subjected to an effect that a save can end.
Effect: The triggering effect ends.

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Racial Traits

Average Height: 6′1′-6′5′
Average Weight: 190-240 lb.

Ability Scores: +2 Constitution; +2 Intelligence or +2 Charisma
Size: Medium
Speed: 6 squares
Vision: Low-light vision
Languages: Common, Goblin
Skill Bonuses: +2 Athletics, +2 History

Battle Ready: You gain a +2 racial bonus to initiative checks.
Phalanx Soldier: You gain a +1 racial bonus to AC while you and at least one ally stand adjacent to each other and each wield a shield.
Hobgoblin Discipline: You have the *hobgoblin discipline* power.

Attitudes and Beliefs

There is no denying that hobgoblins are strict by the standards of most races. Those who make mistakes are punished swiftly, and poor excuses for dishonorable behavior are not tolerated. From a young age, hobgoblins are taught that untruths weaken the one who speaks them, making that individual unworthy of being trusted in the future. Conversely, a hobgoblin who takes responsibility for errors and accepts the punishment without flinching may receive some amount of acclaim for doing so.

Hobgoblins worship two gods above all others: Bane and his exarch Maglubiyet receive great respect within hobgoblin society. In particular, Bane's doctrine of seizing power over the undeserving is accepted unthinkingly by most hobgoblins.

The warriors in the ranks of a hobgoblin army typically have proficiency with shields and flails. The advocacy of "defense, and an offense that overcomes it" is an important part of the doctrine of hobgoblin warfare. The combination of flail and shield, aside from being effective on the attack, also provides a built-in defense against others turning the hobgoblins' weapons against them, since both items are difficult to use effectively without training. In addition, many hobgoblins are adept in using flails to strike around inexpertly wielded shields.

Hobgoblins greatly prefer being in control to any sense of indecision or chaos. This mind-set has led them to organize themselves and their kin, goblins and bugbears, into an orderly society in an attempt to civilize the wilderness. The thought of "untamed nature" is likely to cause a hobgoblin to curl a lip in distaste. The main exception to this attitude among hobgoblins is in the art of beast handling, where tamer is not necessarily better. Hobgoblins (and to a lesser extent, goblins) have reputations for being excellent riders, using horses and sometimes more exotic mounts such as dire tigers as steeds. These mounts cannot be considered domesticated, but the hobgoblins do know how to channel the creatures' aggression to work against the hobgoblins' foes. In this way, the mounts resemble the hobgoblins themselves—far from tame, but tightly controlling their behavior to achieve their goals.

Hobgoblin History

Hobgoblins have a great deal of reverence for the history of their people, and hobgoblin loremasters hold an honored place within the clans. Due to their reliance on oral tradition, loremasters must have exceptional memories and exemplary honor, because any minor gloss or change could be passed down for generations. At the same time, most hobgoblins distrust written histories: Who can be certain who wrote them? This distrust has led to few histories being written down by hobgoblins, thereby indirectly justifying their point of view.

According to the loremasters, the hobgoblins were the first people from the natural world to cross into the Feywild. The people there were fractious and wild, attacking the hobgoblins' scouts. The clan chiefs realized that order would need to be imposed. The next scouting parties were better protected, and they focused on mapping out the corresponding sides of fey crossings. As the attacks on the scouts dropped off due to the improved defenses, the hobgoblin armies massed on the other side of the fey crossings. The fey creatures' lack of interest in the natural world proved to be their downfall when the hobgoblins invaded simultaneously from a variety of positions. This was the start of the hobgoblins' Feywild empire.

The hobgoblins' rule continued on for many generations, but the history grows vague during this era. Stories speak of brother turning against sister, the poisoned words of the fey whispered in their ears, until finally the empire split apart. The loss of their empire, along with the loss of face, continues to drive the revulsion that most hobgoblins feel toward elves and eladrin.

Since the fall of the empire, hobgoblins have spread out throughout the natural world, though some pockets still remain within the Feywild, fighting a guerrilla war against their foes. Every century or two since that time, a leader has arisen from one of the tribes, and this leader seeks to unite his or her people and reclaim past glory. These attempts have ended in failure—sometimes the unity lasts as long as a decade, but most such uprisings are put down within a couple of years.

Hobgoblin Society

Hobgoblin society is organized into clans consisting of several extended families. Loyalty to one's clan comes first, then to the hobgoblin race, and then to the goblinoid races, including goblins and bugbears. That being said, much honor is accorded to those who balance these obligations, or better still, bring

them to a common purpose. Even their greatest enemies cannot deny that hobgoblins have considerable ability in training and leading armies against their foes. These armies consist primarily of their goblin and bugbear cousins, as well as the hobgoblin officer corps and heavy cavalry, but on occasion include other races. Kobolds, ogres, and even bands of humans have all been part of hobgoblin armies.

From an early age, young hobgoblins are encouraged to determine their greatest strengths, and then make use of them. Although their society places more value on some kinds of jobs than others, it's better to do a less honored job well than to be merely mediocre at a more honored job. Those professions involved in producing—farming, mining, and the like—garner the least respect, and those involved in creating something—smithing, building, and so forth—gain more. The most honored professions are those relating to war and territorial expansion, so while a silversmith is respected, an armorer is revered. This means that most political leaders have been involved in the military, and no noble is separate from the other classes. Although the children of great leaders are more likely to have the opportunity to distinguish themselves (and thereby rise to the nobility themselves), such honor is by no means guaranteed—it must be earned.

Slavery is a fact of life in most hobgoblin societies, and many clans have at least a small number of slaves. Some of the people and other creatures that outsiders see as hobgoblin slaves are actually indentured servants, serving out ten- and twenty-year terms. This practice is not done out of kindness. Rather, hobgoblins have found that most slaves provide poorer labor when they have no hope of freedom, and such slaves are also much more likely to try to escape or revolt. By giving their laborers a chance to earn their freedom earlier through good behavior, the hobgoblins see substantially better results and have cut down on slave revolts considerably. Indeed, they encourage servants to inform their masters of any revolts or escapes being planned in exchange for a reduction in their terms. In this way, they breed distrust, greatly reducing the likelihood of a large-scale slave uprising.

Hobgoblins' lives revolve around two kinds of honor, though "honor" is a poor translation from the original Goblin, which actually encompasses two words. *Atcha* is honor obtained through glorious deeds, such as the subjugation of new lands or the development of powerful new magic weapons and armor. *Muut* is honor obtained through doing one's duty well, whatever that duty is. Young hobgoblins focus on *atcha* when they jostle for rank among their peers, and this is encouraged to some degree by their parents and clan elders. But a common saying states that "A blade without a hilt cuts its wielder": a warning to those who seek *atcha* at the expense of *muut* that their failings will catch up with them one day.

Hobgoblin Adventurers

Despite the strong pressure to conform within hobgoblin society, some hobgoblins rebel and leave their families and clans. Others are banished for a perceived weakness or personal failing, and still others believe that they will find *atcha* more easily by seeking out new lands alone. Even though they have left their society, their society never truly leaves them. These hobgoblins often seek to replace the void left by the loss of clan by bringing together a band of fellows.

Bard

Hobgoblins' love for history and tales of martial combat lends itself to making them exceptional bards and skalds. Their words serve a key role in uniting goblin and bugbear tribes as parts of a hobgoblin-led army. Their words are not the only things others should fear, however, because their fighting style draws upon all the greatest warriors in hobgoblin history.

Battlemind

Psionic powers are no more common among hobgoblins than they are in most other races. Hobgoblins who awaken their psionic potential and channel their wilder sides make excellent battleminds. Training with shields and heavier armor serves them well as they draw attackers away from vulnerable allies.

Blackguard

Although hobgoblins do not make great outward signs of faith as dwarves and elves do, their piety for their dark gods runs deep. The greatest reverence is expressed by those who draw upon the darkness of their own souls to weaken and overwhelm their foes. These blackguards have iron control of their own minds and bodies but sow the seeds of discord while they fight, turning ally against ally and kin against kin.

Warlord

The image of hobgoblin as warlord has been ingrained in the minds of civilized races after countless incursions. Whether they choose to focus on their tactical acumen or to inspire their comrades to fight all the harder, hobgoblins excel in leading at every level from small four- or five-person units all the way up to an army. Perhaps their greatest skill on the battlefield is ensuring that everyone maintains the proper position to gain the maximum tactical advantage. Few sights inspire such fear as ordered ranks of hobgoblins and their allies marching in perfect unison.

Roleplaying a Hobgoblin

When creating a hobgoblin adventurer, here are a few points to consider.

The lone wolf starves, but the pack feasts. You know that a single person going up against any real threat faces a grave disadvantage. After all, in a fair fight, you're just as likely to lose as to win. By joining a group, or better still, organizing one yourself, you become more capable of achieving your goals. It's your duty to ensure that the party is prepared for battle and to know what each member is capable of.

The end can justify the means. It's not always pleasant, but you will do what it takes to get the job done. This isn't an excuse for cruelty without purpose. When the situation is grim and someone has to make the hard choice, you're the leader who steps forward and makes it. Let others keep their consciences clean. You're keeping them alive.

Honor extends both ways. When you pledge yourself to follow another's banner, it is your duty to obey all orders to the best of your ability. When others pledge themselves to you, it is your duty to provide for them and use them to their best potential. These duties do not require mindless devotion from followers; honest opposition has its time and place. The people and the leader must work as one.

Hobgoblin Characteristics: Brusque, courageous, disciplined, inspiring, meticulous, militaristic, pragmatic, proud, unforgiving

Hobgoblin Male Names: Dagii, Drazen, Galtai, Haruuc, Oaan, Rhaano

Hobgoblin Female Names: Bauchana, Ekhaas, Maaziké

Hobgoblin Clan Names: Dar Kuun, Fel'marsh, Naan Ven, Taikhaal, Vra'taash

Hobgoblin Feats

These feats enhance the capabilities of hobgoblins.

Goblinoid Mount Training

None doubt the goblinoids' ability to form tight bonds with mounts.

Prerequisite: Goblin or hobgoblin

Benefit: When you ride a friendly mount, the creature can use your defenses in place of its own (not including any temporary bonuses or penalties).

In addition, the mount can make Acrobatics, Athletics, Endurance, or Stealth checks using your modifier (not including any temporary bonuses or penalties) in place of its own.

Hobgoblin Beast Companion

Your ability to brush aside effects that would harm you extends to your companion animal.

Prerequisite: Hobgoblin, ranger, Beast Companion class feature, *hobgoblin discipline* racial power

Benefit: When you use *hobgoblin discipline* and your beast companion is adjacent to you, you can also end one effect a save can end affecting your beast companion.

In addition, your beast companion gains a +1 feat bonus to all defenses while it is adjacent to you.

Hobgoblin Phalanx Soldier

Hobgoblins favor the phalanx formation above all others. Wielding spear and shield, hobgoblins can protect themselves and their neighbors while marching forward to impale their enemies.

Prerequisite: Strength 13, hobgoblin

Benefit: You gain proficiency with all shields.

In addition, you ignore the check penalty for wearing a shield.

Hobgoblin Weapon Training

The focus on mastery at arms, warfare, and conquest gives hobgoblins ample opportunity to hone their weapon skills. Of all the various weapons hobgoblins use, flails and spears are the most common.

Prerequisite: Hobgoblin

Benefit: You gain proficiency with all flails and spears.

In addition, you gain a +2 feat bonus to the damage rolls of weapon attacks that you make using flails and spears. This bonus increases to +3 at 11th level and +4 at 21st level.

Phalanx Advance

On the battlefield, hobgoblin bards beat drums and bark chants to help soldiers march at the same pace and maintain their formations.

Prerequisite: Hobgoblin, bard, Virtue of Valor class feature

Benefit: When you use your Virtue of Valor class feature, you and each ally adjacent to you can shift 1 square as a free action. Your allies must end the shift in a square adjacent to you.

Warcaster Tactics

Hobgoblin warcasters employ magical attacks to destroy and scatter their enemies. A warcaster's destructive spells sometimes cause casualties among allied soldiers. You learn better control over your magic and can bend its effects away from an ally.

Prerequisite: Hobgoblin, any arcane class

Benefit: You can omit one square adjacent to you from the area of effect of any arcane close blast or burst power you use.

Warrior's Sacrifice

Hobgoblin warriors eat together, rest together, fight together, and die together. A shout and a shove is enough to remind their fellow warriors of the cause for which they fight.

Prerequisite: Hobgoblin, *hobgoblin discipline* racial power

Benefit: As a free action on your turn, you can expend your *hobgoblin discipline* power to allow an ally adjacent to you to make a saving throw.

Hobgoblin Utility Powers

When your hobgoblin character gains a class utility power after 1st level, you can forgo taking a power granted to you by your class. Instead, you gain a hobgoblin utility power of the same level or lower.

Rousing Battle Cry

You shout with the authority gained from your battle experience, ensuring allies regain their feet and defend themselves when enemies attack.

Rousing Battle Cry — Hobgoblin Utility 2

You loose a stirring shout that rouses injured allies to fight once more.

Daily
Minor Action **Close** burst 3
Target: Each ally in the burst
Effect: The target gains 5 temporary hit points. If the target is asleep, it wakens. If the target is prone, it can stand up as a free action.

Hold Formation

Any break in the battle lines can turn a fight into a rout. You know to hold firm your resolve and keep your position no matter what.

Hold Formation — Hobgoblin Utility 6

When a foe tries to move you from your position, you brace yourself to keep the battle line intact.

Encounter
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: An enemy's attack pushes, pulls, or slides you.
Effect: The forced movement does not affect you, and you gain combat advantage against the triggering enemy until the end of your next turn.

Plug the Gap

Veteran hobgoblins know the best way to defeat their enemies is to control their movement. You spring into motion when an enemy tries to escape.

Plug the Gap — Hobgoblin Utility 10

When a foe tries to escape, you move to intercept it or block its path.

Encounter
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: An enemy within 3 squares of you moves without shifting.
Effect: You shift up to 3 squares to a square adjacent to the triggering enemy. You then mark that enemy until the end of your next turn.

Superior Discipline

A hardy and determined people, some hobgoblins strengthen their internal discipline even further.

Superior Discipline — Hobgoblin Utility 16

Calling upon your extensive experience in battle, you improve your ability to fight on through hardship.

Daily
No Action **Personal**
Trigger: You use *hobgoblin discipline*.
Effect: You regain the use of *hobgoblin discipline*.

Tactical Deployment

You have seen hundreds of battlefields. Each has taught you the value of quickly moving yourself and your allies to better positions.

Tactical Deployment — Hobgoblin Utility 22

You shout orders and gesture to your allies, sparking them to move to a more advantageous position.

Encounter
Move Action **Close** burst 5
Target: Each ally in the burst
Effect: The target can shift up to half its speed.

About the Author

Jim Auwaerter is the author of several *D&D Insider* articles, including "Monk Basics" and "Bazaar of the Bizarre: From the Attic of Alluvius Ruskin." He would like to thank Don Bassingthwaite for his excellent portrayal of hobgoblin culture in the Legacy of Dhakaan trilogy. *Raat shan gath'kai dor.*

In Their Weapons, They Live On
The First Wielders

By Logan Bonner

Illustration by Beth Trott

I know my weapon's past. Its history goes back further than your family line and it speaks ancient words of wisdom. But it still cuts as true as the day it was made. So come try me, little fool. Duel with one of the First Wielders!

Some worship the gods. Others bow down to devils, dragons, or other powerful monsters. The First Wielders believe only in the steel of their ancient weapons—and the former owners still contained within them. These First Weapons trap the mind of their last owner when that owner dies.

The First Wielders adhere to a philosophy or warrior code called the One Path. It tells them to fight and kill, to respect their unique weapons, and to crush those weaker than themselves. The First Wielders have a sort of twisted honor, but they're also cruel, vicious, and bloodthirsty. It's difficult to tell whether their code and weapons are keeping them from becoming remorseless villains or are what brought them so close to darkness in the first place.

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The First Weapons

Each of the First Wielders carries a weapon or implement crafted from the metals of the mountain Koskorak. According to lore, these are the First Weapons—the oldest magic weapons that still exist. A First Wielder seeks out any history he or she can find about the First Weapons, especially the item that individual personally carries.

Every First Weapon is an intelligent item that contains the mind of its previous wielder. A First Wielder who dies in battle lives on as a part of the First Weapon that the wielder carried. At the moment of death, the previous intelligence in the item is extinguished and replaced by the mind of the newly dead First Wielder.

Once infused into the weapon, the consciousness of the old owner bears no ill will to the new owner. This natural progression is simply the consequence of being defeated.

The One Path

First Wielders follow a philosophy called the One Path. Some believe these rules have existed since the creation of the First Weapons, but there are no actual records from that time; others think the philosophy was created and expanded upon later.

The One Path consists of seven tenets that dictate how to conduct oneself in battle and in relation to the First Weapons. How a First Wielder behaves in other areas of one's life is of no interest to the other wielders. The Path is silent on the issue, and so are they.

Tenets of the One Path

- **Weapons are made to be used**. Carry your First Weapon proudly into battle and use it to draw blood.
- **Seek the sternest tests**. Show the superiority of your First Weapon by dueling formidable warriors.
- **Be true to one weapon.** A First Wielder must carry no more than one First Weapon. If you come into possession of another First Weapon, you must find another who deserves the weapon and pass it on.
- **Fight as your weapon demands you fight.** A warhammer can shatter bone and smash armor, but a dagger is meant to be hidden—and to kill silently. There is no dishonor in using it as intended.
- **Spare no thought or tear for the weak**. The world bends to the will of the great and strong, and the power you carry puts you above the rest.
- **Respect your predecessor.** Every First Weapon contains the intellect of its previous owner inside it. Show the intellect proper respect and listen to its counsel when it speaks.
- **Find the mountain of creation.** The First Weapons come from the metal of the mountain Koskorak. If you find the mountain, you must spread word to the other First Wielders to make a pilgrimage.

Current Wielders

The known First Weapons and the First Wielders who carry them at present are described below. The wielders don't know for sure if any other First Weapons might be out there—hidden in treasure hoards or carried by people who keep their distance from the others—and they have better things to do than search for them.

Each First Wielder's entry starts with a description of the character. The next section goes into more detail about the character's personality. The final paragraph, called "Walking the Path," describes how that wielder interprets and applies the principles of the One Path.

The First Weapon descriptions follow the character description with a brief introduction to the weapon and its legacy. All First Weapons function as existing magic items of a particular level, as noted in the item's description. The DM might choose a different level for the item from among the available levels as suited to his or her campaign. The "Item Levels as Treasure" guidelines presented in *Adventurer's Vault* provide a handy way to keep these distinctive items in the game for longer than they would normally last.

After the item's description, the entry presents its "sign of power," a unique manifestation that proves the item's magical nature. The "Initial Persona" entry tells you the personality of the first person to have the item and how that personality manifests in the hands of the item's current wielder. The "Intelligent Item Attributes" entry describes the item's alignment, the languages it knows, its method of communication, its current personality, and under what circumstances the item's personality might aid you when you make checks.

Intelligent Weapons

The First Weapons use the guidelines for creating intelligent item described in the article "Intelligent Items: Smart Swords." It appears in both *Dragon* 367 and in the *Dragon Magazine Annual*.

Jaspyr Stonebreach

The dwarf assassin Jaspyr Stonebreach travels between the largest dwarven settlements, killing anyone who has enemies willing to part with enough coin. Jaspyr sows discord wherever he goes. He falsifies evidence to convince dwarf leaders that their subordinates are plotting against them so he can score new assassination contracts. Jaspyr's been known to take on jobs killing the enemies of the dwarves, too. He became something of a minor legend when he climbed a bare rock face to sneak up on a young hill giant that had been leading orc raids against the dwarves of the Löfgren Pass.

Personality: With his cunning mind, Jaspyr easily tricks his marks into doing what he wants. Jaspyr can adopt a façade that makes him seem trustworthy and helpful. His talents work best against dwarves, so he sticks mainly to his own kind. When he's not putting up a false front, Jaspyr displays his greedy, conceited side.

Walking the Path: Jaspyr has no qualms about taking advantage of his people. If they were truly strong, they wouldn't fall for his schemes. In fact, those few who resist his machinations are the only ones he truly respects. Jaspyr rarely turns down an assassination contract, even if the odds are stacked against him. The Path tells him that he should use *Throat-Slitter* boldly.

Throat-Slitter

The thin, razor-edged dagger called *Throat-Slitter* has claimed countless lives. Its owners defy the riskiest situations and live to tell the tale. They kill from the shadows or distract their enemies with flashy displays while dragging the blade across their victims' throats. *Throat-Slitter* is the most mysterious of the First Weapons, and several times it has disappeared from history for a decade or more. Whose blood did it spill in those unrecorded days?

Jaspyr Stonebreach	**Level 5 Lurker**
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf	XP 200
HP 52; **Bloodied** 26	**Initiative** +10
AC 19, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16	**Perception** +8
Speed 5	Low-light vision

Traits

Combat Advantage
If Jaspyr hits with an attack against a target granting combat advantage to him, he deals the target 2d6 extra damage.

Stand the Ground
Jaspyr can move 1 square fewer than the effect specifies when subjected to a pull, a push, or a slide.

Steady-Footed
Jaspyr can make a saving throw to avoid falling prone when an attack would knock him prone.

Standard Actions

Throat-Slitter (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 3d4 + 5 damage, or 2d8 + 17 on a critical hit.

Thrown Throat-Slitter (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 3d4 + 5 damage, or 2d8 + 17 on a critical hit.
Effect: *Throat-Slitter* returns to Jaspyr's hand.

Blessing of Hidden Steel (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: Jaspyr must be in an obscured square.
Effect: Jaspyr becomes invisible until he hits or misses with an attack or until he is no longer in an obscured square. While invisible as a result of this power, Jaspyr gains a +2 power bonus to attack rolls.

Move Actions

Stick and Move ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: Jaspyr must have hit this turn with an attack using *Throat-Slitter*.
Effect: Jaspyr shifts up to his speed.

Triggered Actions

Try Your Luck ✦ **Daily**
Trigger: Jaspyr makes an attack roll and dislikes the result.
Effect (Free Action): Reroll the attack roll. Use the second roll, even if it's lower.

Skills Athletics +7, Stealth +11, Thievery +11

Str 10 (+2)	**Dex** 18 (+6)	**Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5)	**Int** 12 (+3)	**Cha** 14 (+4)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Dwarven
Equipment leather armor, *Throat-Slitter*, 4 daggers

Throat-Slitter is a +2 *luckblade* dagger (see *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*, page 348).

Sign of Power: The person holding *Throat-Slitter* can hear the heartbeat of the nearest living person through the dagger.

Initial Persona: The owner before Jaspyr was his grandfather, Gardain Stonebreach. The old dwarf had become the leader of his clan before his grandson assassinated him, and the old man keeps pressing Jaspyr to take on leadership roles rather than spending all his time alone and stalking victims. Gardain rarely talks to anyone but Jaspyr, and never to non-dwarves.

Intelligent Item Attributes: *Throat-Slitter* is evil. It knows Common and Dwarven and communicates telepathically with any creature touching it.

The mind of Jaspyr Stonebreach, a dwarf assassin, lurks inside *Throat-Slitter*. Jaspyr offers advice on how to kill enemies quickly and effectively. Sometimes he gives good tactical advice or exposes weaknesses of monsters. Other times he urges his wielder to kill obstinate diplomats or rob from the weak.

At the DM's discretion, Jaspyr Stonebreach might grant you a +2 bonus to checks related to dwarven cities, assassinations, and the First Wielders.

Sister Ulvina

For most of her life, Ulvina followed Bahamut. Cloistered among other devotees of the Platinum Dragon, she studied holy texts and improved her body and mind so she could defend weaker people against tyrants and killers. She had her chance when Sawgin the Cold-Blooded laid siege to the prestigious Platinum Academy where she had become headmistress. Ulvina strode forth in her gleaming platinum armor and challenged Sawgin to a duel. The warlord code of honor as a First Wielder drove him to accept. But he lost.

Sister Ulvina kept Sawgin's mace as a trophy. At first she ignored his disembodied words, but over

time she became more and more curious about the One Path. Two years after the battle, Ulvina disappeared from the Academy, her pockets filled with a great share of their treasury. She fell from grace with Bahamut and became a First Wielder. With her new weapon in hand, Ulvina took on the life of an adventurer and mercenary.

She also took on the task of researching the history of the First Wielders and sharing it with the others. She keeps a book that holds the most complete history of the wielders, their weapons, and the deeds of both. Ulvina protected the book with wards, and it bears strict orders to deliver the book to a First Wielder upon her death. She rarely stays in one place for long.

Personality: Sister Ulvina's grim, tough attitude seems in contrast with her past as a religious scholar. Some of her mannerisms echo the rites of the devout: She lowers her head as in prayer when she's thinking, and she treats her mace and gear with reverence. Sister Ulvina rarely chooses to steal, kill, or rob on her own. Instead, she seeks out mercenary work with no regard to whether it involves killing or theft. She's crossed the line into evil several times, but she returns to a more balanced approach again and again.

Walking the Path: Ulvina's conversion from the servant of a lawful good to an amoral mercenary and thrill-seeker has never been smooth. Through all her study (and practical experience), she has never been able to give herself over entirely to the One Path. A part of her still wants to protect the weak, or at least avoid mistreating them any more than she must. She accepts most mercenary jobs but avoids ones that would force her to target innocents—and she's never taken a job against a temple or adherent of Bahamut.

Sister Ulvina **Level 8 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 350

HP 88; **Bloodied** 44 **Initiative** +6
AC 24, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 21 **Perception** +8
Speed 5

Traits

☼ **Blessing of Guardian Steel ✦ Aura** 1
Enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls against creatures other than Ulvina.

The Prince's Reward
When she drops an enemy to 0 hit points with *The Prince Who Thirsts*, Ulvina gains 5 temporary hit points.

Standard Actions

⊕ **The Prince Who Thirsts** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage, or 23 damage plus 1d6 necrotic damage on a critical hit.

⊗ **Crossbow** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 15 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage.

↯ **Echo of the Dragon** (thunder) ✦ **Encounter**
Effect: Ulvina uses *The Prince Who Thirsts*. On a hit, each enemy adjacent to her also takes 2d6 thunder damage and falls prone.

↯ **Forced Duel ✦ At-Will**
Requirement: Ulvina must be wielding *The Prince Who Thirsts*.
Trigger: An enemy willingly leaves a square adjacent to Ulvina.
Effect *(Immediate Interrupt):* Ulvina uses *The Prince Who Thirsts* against the triggering enemy. On a hit, the enemy also falls prone.

Skills Religion +10

Str 18 (+8)	**Dex** 10 (+4)	**Wis** 18 (+8)
Con 16 (+7)	**Int** 13 (+5)	**Cha** 14 (+6)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment plate armor, *The Prince Who Thirsts*, crossbow, 10 bolts

The Prince Who Thirsts

The business end of this hefty mace is shaped like a young prince's head cast in steel, with a hawkish nose and curling hair. Atop the head is a steel crown studded with gems. The flanges of the crown make a strike with the mace especially painful.

The known history of this item reveals that the mace was designed in the image of a dead prince as a tribute, and that his warlike father carried it into battle. Their names have been lost to time. Most of those First Wielders who owned *The Prince Who Thirsts* were especially brutal and warlike.

The Prince Who Thirsts is a *+2 lifedrinker* mace (see *Dungeon Master's Kit*, page 258).

Sign of Power: The prince's face contorts when no one's looking. Sometimes the steel face smiles broadly, and other times it's wracked with sorrow. When the mace steals life force for the wielder (when it drops an enemy to 0 hit points), blood runs from the corners of the prince's mouth.

Initial Persona: Sawgin the Cold-Blooded tore a swath of destruction wherever he went. He led a company of thieves and killers called Hell's Six Dozen, and he still wants to find the ex-members to see what trouble they've gotten up to since his death. As the mind within *The Prince Who Thirsts*, he urges Ulvina to be merciless. If she allows surrender, he bellows his disapproval. For her part, Ulvina often denies Sawgin's demands.

Intelligent Item Attributes: The item is unaligned. It knows Common and communicates telepathically with any creature touching it.

The mind of Sister Ulvina, a follower of Bahamut turned morally ambivalent mercenary, speaks from inside the weapon. If asked, she rambles on in great detail about the history of the First Wielders or the religious tenets of Bahamut's worshipers. She rarely offers opinions on her wielder's actions unless the wielder is about to take a morally abhorrent action. In this case, she tries talking the wielder into taking a less gruesome option.

At the DM's discretion, the item might grant you a +2 bonus to checks related to Bahamut, religious study, and the First Wielders.

"Spellblood" Onéshoi

Gifted with mysterious magical power but unsure how to use it, the half-elf Onéshoi has been searching for a purpose and duty since he came of age. He has the ability to innately channel magic, but he can't control it very well. Since his power first manifested, others whispered that he had the blood of demons or dragons in his veins. Some elves claimed his human mother made a deal with devils, and some humans blamed his elf father for bringing down a curse upon the child from the capricious fey. The family were outcasts wherever they went, and Onéshoi continues to act like an outsider wherever his travels take him.

Onéshoi gained *Horizon's Span*—his First Weapon—when he was still young, and holding it and hearing the counsel of its former owner gave him a better sense of purpose. More than most other wielders, Onéshoi allowed his life to be shaped by the tenets of the One Path. Its dictates drove him to seek out great challenges and blaze his path across the world. Few townsfolk or even rulers know of Onéshoi, but he's famous among battle-hardened mercenaries and adventurers. He has challenged and defeated scores of prominent warriors who were unprepared to face his unbound magic.

Perhaps most impressive is the sheer number of dragons Onéshoi has slain. He can't resist testing his mettle against the greatest physical and elemental threats in the land. Onéshoi doesn't care whether a dragon menaces people or helps them, just whether it's strong and has a vast hoard of treasure. In one case, a green dragon had captured the workers from a town and forced them to serve as slaves. The townsfolk rejoiced when the half-elf hero arrived and slew the dragon, but the next day they received a letter saying the workers were now his, and demanding the town pay a ransom to free them.

Personality: Onéshoi calls very few people "friends." His life has largely been a solitary one, only teaming up with others to make a profit or conserve resources during a long or difficult journey. He communicates with the mind inside *Horizon's Span* more often than he does with living people. Mundane matters concern him little. Even though he's become wealthy from his battles and adventures, only the next challenge and the next step along the One Path seem to matter. Onéshoi expects to die valiantly one day, fighting a great dragon that's beyond his capability to defeat.

Walking the Path: The One Path guides Onéshoi's actions, and he follows its tenets to the letter. He reveres and cares for his blade like a precious idol; *Horizon's Span* is always clean and sharp, and he never allows anyone else to transport or touch it. He never makes a significant decision without consulting Tolanna, the consciousness inside his First Weapon.

GETTING WEAPONIZED

What if a player character is killed while wielding one of the First Weapons? Like any other wielder of one of the weapons, the adventurer's mind is pulled into the item. If the party has ways to cheat death (such as the Raise Dead ritual or epic destiny features that help escape death), give them a way to delay the transfer so they can exercise their options.

If an adventurer does get stuck in a First Weapon, look for ways to make it a part of your campaign story. You might have the enemy who killed the character take the weapon (as is supposed to happen when a First Wielder is slain) and run off with it. Give the adventurers the option of chasing down the killer. They might undertake a quest to restore their trapped ally by pulling the soul from the blade and raising the dead—or maybe putting the consciousness into a golem body. Depending on who kills the wielder, you might allow the player to replace the slain character with that enemy, playing both characters at once from now on.

"Spellblood" Onéshoi **Level 11 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, half-elf XP 600

HP 139; **Bloodied** 69 **Initiative** +6
AC 23, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 23 **Perception** +7
Speed 6 Low-light vision
Resist 5 acid, 5 cold, 5 fire, 5 lightning

Traits

Unbound Arcana
When he rolls initiative and at the end of each of his turns, roll a d20. Until he rolls again, Onéshoi can use the power corresponding to the result at-will: 1-10, *cold steel*; 11-17, *spellblood teleport*; 18-20, *lightning rod*.

Standard Actions

Horizon's Span (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12 + 9 damage. On a critical hit, *Horizon's Span* deals 33 + 2d12 + 3d10 damage and another 2d12 + 3d10 damage to the target at the start of Onéshoi's next turn.

Leaping Fire (fire) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +14 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + 10 fire damage.

Lightning Rod (lightning) ✦ See *unbound arcana*
Effect: Onéshoi uses *Horizon's Span*, and then makes a secondary attack.
Secondary Attack: Close burst 10 (one creature in the burst); + 14 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8 + 5 lightning damage, and Onéshoi repeats the attack with the burst centered on the target who was hit. He continues repeating the attack until he misses.

Move Actions

Spellblood Teleport (teleportation) ✦ See *unbound arcana*
Effect: Close burst 1 (allies in the burst). Onéshoi and each target can teleport up to 10 squares as a free action.

Minor Actions

Cold Steel (cold) ✦ See *unbound arcana*
Effect: If Onéshoi's hits with his next melee attack, the target takes 1d6 extra cold damage.

Str 22 (+11)	**Dex** 12 (+6)	**Wis** 14 (+7)
Con 19 (+9)	**Int** 16 (+8)	**Cha** 20 (+10)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic, Elven
Equipment leather armor, *Horizon's Span*

Horizon's Span

The history of the enormous fullblade *Horizon's Span* causes many to consider it the greatest of the First Weapons. Everyone who possessed it had some sort of superhuman might or monstrous blood. It seems it's impossible for a normal person to wield—or at least it's impossible for a normal person to defeat the caliber of wielder who carries the blade. Every warrior who carried *Horizon's Span* went on to become a legend.

Horizon's Span is a +3 *bloodiron* fullblade (see *Adventurer's Vault*, page 65).

Sign of Power: Magical energy has left strange patterns—similar to tarnish—on the blade. They shift and move, appearing vaguely like a vast horizon and a sun tracing a path across the sky.

Initial Persona: Tolanna the Cold's mother gave birth to her while held captive by a white dragon. After her mother died during childbirth, Tolanna miraculously survived for several days on her own. The dragon, Brillkar, was intrigued by the tough little creature and raised her. A white dragon's parenting turned Tolanna into a vicious, cruel creature. She impresses the power and majesty of dragons upon Onéshoi, along with the eat-or-be-eaten outlook they take. Tolanna's guidance was the main impetus for his quest to battle greater and greater dragons.

Intelligent Item Attributes: The item is unaligned. It knows Common, Draconic, and Elven, and it communicates telepathically with any creature touching it.

Onéshoi isn't content if his wielder has few ambitions. He was a slayer of dragons and made this weapon proud with the blood he offered it. He congratulates his wielder after a victorious battle and quietly seethes if he senses cowardice.

At the DM's discretion, the item might grant you a +2 bonus to checks related to dragons or to the First Wielders.

UPGRADING FIRST WEAPONS

An adventurer carrying one of the First Weapons might discover that it becomes more powerful over time. In other words, a player might receive a higher enhancement bonus on the First Weapon instead of gaining a new magic item for his or her character. Use the "Item Levels as Treasure" rules from Appendix 3 of *Mordenkainen's Magnificent Emporium*™ to increase the power of a First Weapon.

Pri'eska Vilgraff

Stolen from the Feywild and imprisoned in the Nine Hells, Pri'eska freed herself from slavery to become a commander of infernal legions. She is a winter nymph—one of the most beautiful creatures in existence. Her original life and name were taken from her by Fierna, the patron of fire and pleasure. This devil co-rules Phlegethos, one of the Nine Hells, and she captured a great many nymphs from the Feywild to give as gifts and trophies to her loyal servants. Pri'eska ended up in a possession of a lesser vassal named Ontrikaz.

Trapped in Ontrikaz's fiery realm, the blue-skinned wood nymph stood out. Ontrikaz's servants gave her the name Pri'eska, which roughly translates to "icy flower." The greater devils had taken away her natural wood nymph powers, and she saw little hope for an escape. Fortunately for her, Ontrikaz owned another prize—a steel wand called *Messenger of Flame*.

Pri'eska noticed that Ontrikaz frequently left the wand unattended. When she touched it, she sensed the intelligence of a First Wielder within. The weapon believed Ontrikaz was a poor steward—too lazy and

Pri'eska Vilgraff **Level 12 Controller (Leader)**
Medium fey humanoid, winter nymph XP 700

HP 118; **Bloodied** 59 **Initiative** +12
AC 26, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 24 **Perception** +10
Speed 7 (forest walk), fly 10 Low-light vision
Resist 5 fire

Traits

Hell's Mandate (fire) ✦ **Aura** 2
If an ally in the aura hits with a melee or ranged attack, the target takes 3 extra fire damage.

Fire Critical
If Pri'eska scores a critical hit with an implement power, the target takes 10 extra fire damage.

Standard Actions

Coldfire Touch (cold, fire, implement) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 11 cold and fire damage.

Winter Flame (cold, fire, implement) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +15 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + 11 cold and fire damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

Nettling Wind ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in the blast); +15 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 8 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

Infernal Blizzard (cold, fire, implement) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Attack: Close burst 3 (enemies in the burst); +13 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 8 cold and fire damage, or 2d6 +15 cold and fire damage if the target is slowed or immobilized.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Pri'eska flies up to 10 squares. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Triggered Actions

Devastating Flame ✦ **Daily**
Trigger: While using *Messenger of Flame*, Pri'eska hits with a fire implement power.
Effect (No Action): The attack's damage is maximized against the target Pri'eska hit.

Skills Arcana +16, Bluff +15, History +16
Str 14 (+8) **Dex** 22 (+12) **Wis** 19 (+10)
Con 14 (+8) **Int** 20 (+11) **Cha** 19 (+10)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Elven, Giant, Supernal
Equipment robes, *Messenger of Flame*

dependent on others to be a true wielder. With the wand's guidance, Pri'eska learned she could channel a part of the magic she had long ago lost by doing so through the wand. She challenged Ontrikaz and killed him in front of his troops. They fell under her command, and she led the devils to the world instead of remaining in the Nine Hells.

Pri'eska found the abandoned Castle Vilgraff and claimed it as her own, then adopted its name as her own during her travels in the world. She commands the devils to loot and plunder in her name, but she rarely travels with them. Instead, she searches for Koskorak, the mountain of creation.

Personality: Winter nymphs are aloof and enigmatic at the best of times, and Pri'eska's time in the Nine Hells made her merciless and unsympathetic. She controls or kills those weaker than her, avoids the attention of those more powerful than her, and ignores anyone who doesn't have something she wants. Pri'eska's voice is beautiful and graceful, but unless she's trying to trick someone her words are harsh and unforgiving.

Walking the Path: Though Ontrikaz's mind is stuck in the wand, Pri'eska learned about the First Wielders and the One Path from the previous consciousness. She sought out other wielders when she returned to the world from the Nine Hells. From them, she learned the tenets of the path. To her, the most intriguing goal is finding Koskorak, the mountain of creation. She continues to research its location, tracing the origins of various weapons to try to find a place that seems to create an abundance of magic weapons. If she can find Koskorak, Pri'eska plans to claim it as her territory and allow only the other wielders to come there freely.

Messenger of Flame

The steel wand called *Messenger of Flame* always ends up in the unlikeliest of hands. Some wielders were leaders. Others just got in a lucky shot and claimed the wand even though they had little skill with magic. The wand has traveled across every plane, been held by numerous types of creatures, and been used by both the most devout First Wielders and those who were ignorant of its special powers.

Messenger of Flame is a *+3 wand of fire* (see *Mordenkainen's Magnificent Emporium*, page 55).

Sign of Power: The wand casts light as though it were rippling with multicolored fire, though no flames can be seen.

Initial Persona: Ontrikaz hurls insults at Pri'eska constantly when she wields *Messenger of Flame*. To her, nothing could sound sweeter. It's poetic justice that her devil captor is now imprisoned by her hand, and every curse serves as a reminder of his misery.

Intelligent Item Attributes: The item is evil. It knows Common, Elven, Giant, and Supernal and communicates telepathically with any creature touching it.

Pri'eska Vilgraff acknowledges the bearer of *Messenger of Flame* as the new ruler of Castle Vilgraff and of the devils she commanded. She advises the wielder willingly, but waits for a perfect opportunity to give bad advice that will get him or her killed. Pri'eska spent too much time imprisoned, and she wants her consciousness to be pushed out of the wand so she will be free.

At the DM's discretion, the item might grant you a +2 bonus to checks related to devils, the Nine Hells, or the First Wielders.

About the Author

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Blade Growth Examples:
BLADELINGS
AVERAGE HEIGHT: 6'
AVERAGE WEIGHT: 260 LBS.
MALE BLADELING
This fighter eschews armor in favor of his natural weaponry.
FEMALE BLADELING
This ranger wears armor designed to allow her blades to show through.
Grotesques are common decoration for bladeling equipment.
Steel predators are common companions for bladelings in service of Bane.
Bladelings gravitate toward swords as weapons.
FIG. A
FIG. B
FIG. C

Winning Races: Bladelings

Written and illustrated by Claudio Pozas

Bane, the god of war and conquest, shaped mortal humanoids into bladelings to fight in the interminable wars raging across his astral dominion, Chernoggar. Since that time, bladelings have spread across the planes, making their homes anywhere they can, be it the grimy streets of Sigil, the pristine towers of Hestavar, or the fiery precincts of the City of Brass.

Bladelings support themselves by selling their skills to whoever can keep them supplied with gold and glory. With their military experience in high demand almost anywhere, they not only survive but thrive. This article explores the use of bladelings as player characters in a campaign.

Physical Qualities

Bladelings stand a bit taller than humans, and most have chiseled and athletic bodies. They weigh more than one might expect due to the dense, metallic nature of their skeletons and skin. Bladelings' coloration ranges from pale green to a dark, bruise-like purple. Many also have rust-colored freckles. A bladeling's eyes range from silver to pitch-black.

These qualities alone would not set bladelings apart from the countless humanoid variations encountered in the planes. What makes them distinct are the blades and spines that sprout from their flesh. The spurs on their brows and most of their bodies reach about a half-inch to an inch, while longer blades, typically growing on the shoulders and legs, can be more than two feet

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long. These blades grow continually, much like a fish's scales, and damage to or removal of one offers only the slightest discomfort to a bladeling. A broken spur crumbles to rust in a matter of minutes.

Through careful pruning and their innate ability to guide the blades' growth, bladelings can shape their appearance much as humans cut their hair or grow beards. A few of the more radical or antisocial individuals let their blades grow wild, hampering the use of most armor, but these are a minority. The average bladeling is more practical than that, preferring to cultivate shapes designed to impress or intimidate.

Attitudes and Beliefs

Bladelings wall off their emotions, presenting a stoic façade to everyone they meet. Dour and humorless, they approach even the most innocent situations with shrewd and calculating minds. Their ability to focus in complex and chaotic situations makes bladelings ideal soldiers, and their ingenuity helps them find the solution to almost any problem. Every bladeling sees the world through a strategist's eye and takes nothing lightly, not even idle conversation.

Bladelings take pride in their fighting skills and have a hard time backing down from a challenge. No matter how slim the odds, no matter how desperate the situation, they acquit themselves without fear, coldly doing what must be done to emerge victorious. They believe in themselves foremost, not because they lack faith in their allies, but out of an almost pathological need to prove themselves capable.

The bladelings' connection to Bane and the estrangement that persists between them and their maker give these people a perspective that poisons their views of all gods. They know that Bane shaped them to suit his purposes, but rather than seeing him as a benevolent creator, many bladelings have come to regard him as a tyrant, an opportunist, and a meddler. Even those with a more forgiving view can be cynical and suspicious when it comes to the divine powers, or anyone in authority for that matter. The few bladelings who do follow a divine path see their deities as partners in a mutually beneficial relationship, producing fewer clerics and more avengers among them.

Although the bladelings have largely parted from their maker, many remain in Bane's service. Those who still serve him regard the others as misguided rebels, while those who have escaped Bane's tyranny see their kin on Chernoggar as narrow-minded sycophants. Predictably, meetings between the different factions almost always end in violence.

Forging of the Bladelings

The creation of the mortal world heralded the greatest war the cosmos has ever witnessed, pitting the gods of the Astral Sea against the primordials of the Elemental Chaos. Yet the Dawn War didn't ignite immediately. Chaotic and dispersed, the primordials did not immediately notice the gods' meddling with the middle realm. By the time the elemental lords mounted their assault, the world had already been blessed with some of the Astral Sea's stability, and life found what it needed to thrive. Whether spontaneously or through divine guidance, sentient beings arose there. And among those primeval mortals the gods found their first followers.

One such god was the stoic Achra, the Iron General, brother of cruel Tuern and thunderous Kord. Achra's martial teachings found purchase within a few primitive mortal tribes, providing them the tools to bring order into an age of anarchy. According to most scholars, these primitive mortals were humans. A few dissidents claim that they were actually from the same racial stock that would eventually give rise to the githyanki and githzerai. Whatever they were, these mortals became the first of Achra's followers,

Racial Traits

Average Height: 5′8″-6′4″
Average Weight: 210-310 lb.

Ability Scores: +2 Wisdom; +2 Strength or Dexterity
Size: Medium
Speed: 6 squares
Vision: Normal

Languages: Common
Skill Bonuses: +2 Arcana, +2 Intimidate
Acid Resistance: You have acid resistance equal to 5 + one-half your level.
Barbed Body: Your body has the barbed armor property. Whenever you escape a creature's grab on your turn, or a creature escapes your grab, it takes damage equal to 2 + one-half your level. If you're wearing barbed armor or carrying a barbed shield, the creature takes this damage only once.
Razor Storm: You have the *razor storm* power.

Razor Storm **Bladeling Racial Attack**

Spikes and blades leap from your body to tear through your foes.

Encounter
Minor Action **Close** burst 1
Target: Each creature in the burst
Attack: Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity vs. Reflex. You gain a +2 bonus to the attack roll.
Level 11: The bonus increases to +4.
Level 21: The bonus increases to +6.
Hit: 1d6 + Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity modifier damage.
Level 11: 2d6 + Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity modifier damage.
Level 21: 3d6 + Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity modifier damage.

dedicated to his teachings of battle and strategy to an extent that rivaled even the god's angels. This dedication, coupled with their own mortal initiative and ingenuity, made them paragons of martial prowess. Through strength of arms, they tamed the wilderness around them and established some of the earliest city-states of the mortal world. So pleased was Achra with his worshipers that, when the Dawn War broke out, he offered them a place in his own divine legions.

When the gods' armies marched on the forces of the primordial Tabrach-Ti, the Queen of Bronze, they counted many of Achra's mortal followers among their numbers. It is said that the mortals fought with unmatched fervor and efficiency, slaying archons, elementals, and giants alike in the name of their divine general. As the battle reached its end, Achra slew the Queen of Bronze, the first primordial to die in the war, and was acclaimed as the General of Heaven by the other gods. His elemental enemies, on the other hand, began fearfully calling him by another name, which would identify him forevermore: Bane. And in this aspect the war god gazed approvingly upon his surviving mortal champions and elevated them to the status of favored servants.

Rise of Achra's Favored

After uncounted ages, the forces of the Astral Sea prevailed. It was a pyrrhic victory for the Iron General, though. His ambitions of being instituted as the commander of a single, unified pantheon were frustrated. Bane looked upon the other gods and found them to be too narrow-minded and unfocused. They needed proper guidance, and Bane realized he was the only one in a position to do it. Looking for a new seat of power from which to launch his campaign to conquer the other divine realms, he decided to take over Tuern's domain in Chernoggar, for he remembered how often his brother had attempted to undermine his leadership.

Quarrelsome and undisciplined as he was, Tuern was still a formidable opponent, and Bane needed soldiers to seize the iron fortress of Tuer-Chern. His angels were too evenly matched with those of his brother, but the Iron General had something Tuern lacked: his mortal champions. Through his divine power, Bane molded his favored servants into the perfect warrior race, melding them with the blades they used in battle. The war god gave each of them a body as strong as a greatsword and as agile as a flashing dagger. As their skin bonded with iron and steel, the mortals gained the ability to grow razors and spikes from their bodies. And knowing that a blade is only as strong as the thought that guides it—something his brother never seemed to grasp—the Iron General sharpened his followers' minds, granting them the willpower, insight, and determination to make them the perfect soldiers. Whatever they had been before, Bane's servants became an entirely new race. Pleased with his work, he christened his children bladelings, a name they carry to this day.

Tuern's forces were crushed underneath the boots of Bane's armies, and the Iron General was enthroned as the lord of Chernoggar. The bladelings considered themselves natives of the newly conquered domain, having shed their blood to win this homeland. They stood by Bane's side when the other gods united to discourage their lord from waging war against them. When one-eyed Gruumsh crashed his own domain of Nishrek into that of Bane, they fought valiantly to repel the orc hordes of the slaughter god.

Throughout these battles against Tuern and then Gruumsh, the bladelings followed the Iron General's every order. Devoted as they were to martial discipline, they had complete trust in their maker. But everything changed when the goblins came.

Goblin Migration

Unknown to the bladelings, other worshipers of Bane began proselytizing among the hobgoblins of the middle world. The hobgoblins were resistant at first but eventually accepted the teachings of the Iron General to gain the upper hand against the more numerous goblins and the stronger bugbears. In what at first seemed to be another military excursion, Bane marched on the domain of the goblin god Maglubiyet. His absence left only the bladelings to keep Gruumsh's forces at bay. Perhaps the orc god knew of Bane's movements, for he mounted an overwhelming offensive against Tuer-Chern. Only through great sacrifice did the bladelings repel the assault. They fought fiercely, hoping to further prove themselves to the Iron General.

But the bladelings were appalled when Bane returned, with Maglubiyet in tow as his newest exarch and thousands of goblins migrating to settle in Chernoggar under his banner. The uncouth, unruly

THE LADY OF PAIN

Though no sane person would suggest that the Lady of Pain is related to the bladelings—especially not within earshot of Sigil's ruler—the physical similarities are remarkable. Some chalk this resemblance up to simple coincidence, since blades aren't exactly unique in a cosmos that has known war since its earliest age. But a few scholars from the Athar faction, always eager to prove that the gods aren't all-powerful, have suggested that the Lady of Pain might have been Bane's inspiration for the final form of the bladelings. Of course, this theory suggests that the Lady is much older than the gods are willing to admit. For their part, the bladelings claim no common ancestry and certainly don't attempt to worship the Lady of Pain in any way. They do take special pride in their shared attributes, however, and enjoy the wider berth other people give them in the streets of Sigil.

creatures brought chaos to the realm the bladelings had given so much to defend. And still the Iron General spoke of discipline and valor, even when the goblins knew nothing of these things. Like elder children replaced by younger, spoiled siblings, the bladelings grew resentful, and they began to yearn for independence from their dark god.

Diaspora of Blades

A schism formed between the undisciplined goblins and Bane's veterans, who prided themselves on their loyalty, devotion to duty, and obedience to their maker. Dissent spread through the ranks of bladelings, eroding their dedication. In what some have come to call "Tuern's revenge," the bladelings began to question their creator's judgment, as if the original master of Tuer-Chern were still undermining his brother's authority. What had long been a monolithic force quickly fractured into several factions. Some remained loyal, remembering their vows to their master's cause. Others defied their maker and fled into Chernoggar's wilderness, where they would spend generations in hiding. Most left the dominion altogether, spreading out across the Astral Sea and beyond to find new lives for themselves free from oppression's yoke.

These emigrant bladelings were at first exhilarated by the prospect of exploring the cosmos and finally living on their own terms. Soon, though, the novice planewalkers chanced upon the planar metropolis of Sigil, the City of Doors. Although lacking the military structure of Tuer-Chern, Sigil's bladed battlements, ever-present razorvine, and acidic smog gave the city an eerie similarity to the bladelings' former home. Most of all, they were struck by the serene countenance of the Lady of Pain etched on arches and doorways. Seeing her bladed image as a sign, many bladelings decided to settle in the Cage.

Bladeling Adventurers

Combat prowess and an innate thirst for glory make bladelings well suited to the adventuring life. They form the iron core of any adventuring group, reminding allies of their purpose and making everyone accountable for their actions. A bladeling's influence can transform the most willful band of individualists into an effective fighting unit with all the discipline of a military squad.

Avenger

Few bladelings seek service to a god, seeing any such act as replacing one divine tyrant for another. Yet for all their skepticism about the gods, some recall the old tales with more than passing fondness and feel driven to pledge their swords to a cause higher than themselves. Such a bladeling enters a cautious arrangement with a god, agreeing to fight on his or her behalf in exchange for divine power.

Fighter

Bane made the bladelings for one purpose: to fight. This nature remains, even though few bladelings have ties to the war god. Many of them become weaponmasters (see *Dragon* 398), usually favoring swords, spears, and similar weapons. Bladelings make exceptional brawling fighters.

Monk

The militaristic roots of all bladelings are revealed in their discipline. Since they can control their warring emotions and achieve focus no matter the situation, bladelings are well suited to monastic traditions. Many seek out githzerai masters in the Elemental Chaos in hopes of attaining ultimate self-control. Bladeling monks favor the Centered Breath tradition.

Ranger

Freed from Bane's service, many bladelings have spent centuries seeking a home in the infinite expanse of the Astral Sea. Some found new lives in service to factions, powers, and organizations, but many still roam the planes, searching for something to fill the hole left by their god's absence. These wanderers are well equipped to survive hostile environments, and they have developed skills and capabilities that make them exceptional scouts and hunters. Many bladeling rangers put these talents to use as bounty hunters and give chase to some of the most dangerous fugitives in the cosmos.

Runepriest

Bladeling runepriests harness divine power without having to serve any god directly. They might not respect the gods, but they do appreciate their power, especially that gained from studying the Defiant Word and Serene Blade traditions. Bladeling runepriests sometimes work as master weaponsmiths and armorers, working to keep their fellows supplied with superior equipment. The arms and armor they produce are festooned with images memorializing fallen champions and grotesques depicting their enemies.

Roleplaying a Bladeling

When creating a bladeling adventurer, here are a few points to consider.

You live in Bane's shadow. You were molded by the gauntleted hand of the war god, and there's no denying your origins. You were born for war, but how do you face that predestination? You might embrace your warrior nature and block out all other aspects of your life, or you might search for a purpose outside the battlefield. But if you do fight, what do you fight for?

Your homeland is lost. Your people have no homeland to call their own. By leaving Chernoggar behind, you forfeited all claim your people had to it, and it now is overrun by goblins and orcs. Do you seek a new place you can belong to, or do you consider your own body to be your homeland?

You are a child of the planes. You belong to the endless cosmos. As befits such a well-traveled race, you are used to seeing the big picture and putting things in perspective. You know that joy and pain, life and death are fleeting things, so you make the most of the present and try not to worry about what you can't control.

Bladeling Characteristics: Calculating, cold, disciplined, domineering, focused, grim, severe, reserved, withdrawn

Bladeling Names: Adamok, Calamir, Damerik, Edimgar, Fazgarok, Ozerin, Razirin, Urlezar

Bladeling Surnames: Coal, Dim, Ebon, Gloom, Jet, Pitch, Sable, Soot

Bladeling names are used equally by males and females, while their family names are variations of the word "black," a nod to their creator's title as the Black Hand.

Bladeling Feats

You can use the following feats to enhance your character's racial traits and powers, further defining your unusual nature.

Bladed Fists

You cultivate the blades growing on the backs of your hands, keeping them honed to ensure that you are never without a bladed weapon.

Prerequisite: Bladeling

Benefit: Your unarmed attack deals 1d6 damage. In addition, you gain a +2 proficiency bonus to attack rolls you make with unarmed attacks.

Bladed Stalker

Through subtlety and underhanded strikes, you can make the most of your natural weaponry.

Prerequisite: Bladeling, Bladed Fists feat

Benefit: Your unarmed attack gains the high crit weapon property.

Brutal Blades

You keep the blades on your body razor-sharp.

Prerequisite: Bladeling, *razor storm* racial power

Benefit: Your unarmed attack gains the off-hand weapon property.

In addition, the damage dice for your *razor storm* power increase from d6s to d8s.

Improved Razor Storm

You achieve such a mastery over the blades covering your body that you can cause them to burst outward with greater force.

Prerequisite: Bladeling, *razor storm* racial power

Benefit: The size of the burst created by your *razor storm* power increases by 1.

In addition, whenever you score a critical hit using your *razor storm* power, the target also takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Bladeling Utility Powers

Bladelings know many ways to put the spines and blades sprouting from their bodies to good use. As well, their extensive travel across the planes gives them insight into finding hidden portals and astral pathways.

When your bladeling character gains a class utility power after 1st level, you can forgo taking a power granted to you by your class. Instead, you gain a bladeling utility power of the same level or lower.

Rending Spines

Concentrating on the blades that bristle on your body causes them to grow at an accelerated rate until long spines cover you from head to toe. Enemies that would attack you risk impaling themselves on your spines. When you stop concentrating, the excess crumbles away to rust.

Rending Spines — Bladeling Utility 2

Your body spines lengthen to rake and tear any creature that attacks you.

Daily ✦ Stance
Minor Action **Personal**

Effect: You assume the rending spines stance. Until the stance ends, the following effects apply.
- ✦ You are slowed.
- ✦ You take a -2 penalty to all defenses.
- ✦ Any creature adjacent to you that hits or misses you with a melee attack takes damage equal to 3 + one-half your level.

Gouging Blade

You learn to focus your concentration on a single blade, causing it to grow into a jagged spike from your hand that gouges enemies. At any time, you can snap it off to deliver a bleeding wound.

Gouging Blade — Bladeling Utility 6

A jagged spike sprouts from the back of your hand. Each time you strike in melee, the barb delivers a grisly injury.

Daily
Minor Action **Personal**

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, when you hit a creature adjacent to you with a melee attack, that creature takes 1d6 extra damage.

Improvised Portal

You might have explored the City of Doors or just heard stories, but you have heard and learned enough to turn an otherwise unremarkable door into a temporary gateway to somewhere distant.

Improvised Portal Bladeling Utility 10

You scribble a glyph on a door and add a mental push so it opens to someplace it shouldn't.

Encounter
Minor Action **Melee** 1
Target: One door, gate, or similar object
Effect: The target becomes a magical portal to a square within 20 squares of you. The portal lasts until the end of your next turn. Until the effect ends, the target and the square you chose are considered to be adjacent to each other for movement purposes.

Planar Jaunt

You learn how to attune your body to an existing teleportation circle, allowing you to become a living gateway to another plane.

Planar Jaunt Bladeling Utility 16

Although doing so is painful and exhausting, you can whisk yourself and your companions to a destination you have committed to memory.

Daily ✦ Teleportation
Standard Action **Close** burst 5
Requirement: You must use this power at the end of an extended rest.
Target: You and each ally in the burst
Effect: You lose three healing surges. Each target then teleports to a permanent teleportation circle to which you have memorized the sigil sequence.
Special: When you gain this power, you learn the sigil sequences of two permanent teleportation circles in locations determined by the Dungeon Master.

Bred for Battle

Bane created bladelings for war. You can tap into the divine spark that transformed your people to become a living weapon on the battlefield. Your spines and blades lengthen to protect you, and the strikes you make rend your enemies.

Bred for Battle Bladeling Utility 22

You cause the blades all over your body to lengthen and tear your foes, while your awareness of nearby danger heightens.

Daily ✦ Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You assume the bred for battle stance. Until the stance ends, you gain the following benefits.
- ✦ You gain a +2 power bonus to AC.
- ✦ You cannot be marked.
- ✦ Your melee weapon attacks that hit deal 2d6 extra damage.
- ✦ At the end of each of your turns, you can spend a healing surge and regain no hit points. If you do so, you regain the use of your *razor storm* power.

About the Author

Claudio Pozas is a freelance artist and writer whose recent design credits include *Heroes of Shadow*™, *Heroes of the Feywild*™, and numerous *Dragon* and *Dungeon* articles. He lives in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with his wife, Paula; his son, Daniel; and his pet dire tiger, Tyler. His art can be seen at claudiopozas.com.

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Engines of War

By Claudio Pozas

Illustration by Chris Seaman

From the Dawn War between gods and primordials, through the destructive conflict between Arkhosia and Bael Turath, all the way to the current incursions of the Iron Circle, war has been a constant throughout the history of the world. It is little wonder that some mortals, no doubt inspired by the dark whispers of Bane himself, seek more efficient ways to wage the bloody business of warfare. This article presents living siege engines that many of the D&D world's major races have devised.

Clockwork Rookery

Clockwork rookeries are masterpieces of engineering and artifice. Though they look similar to regular siege towers at first glance, they are not only more resilient than the nonliving versions, but also self-propelled, easier to maintain, and sentient. In battle, enemies see ephemeral rooks swarming from the tower to harry them, but these celestial illusions are invisible to the tower's allies. The rookery relies on such allies for direction in battle, acting like the lowest-ranking soldier among them. A rookery that has no commander does its best to fulfill what it understands to be its duty or mission.

A clockwork rookery is 35 feet high (Athletics DC 20 to climb). It has three levels, each with a 10-foot-high ceiling, plus a crenelated rooftop set with animate arbalests—much like arbalester

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homunculi—all around. The lower level features a reinforced iron door that its crew can bar from the inside. The middle and upper levels have arrow slits, and a ladder that runs through the middle of the rookery connects all levels. A trapdoor, which can also be barred from either side, allows access to the roof. Creatures inside the tower or on its exterior move with it as if it were a vehicle.

By Hook or By Crook: The sturdy construction of a clockwork rookery keeps it from collapsing when rendered inoperative. Once inert, a rookery becomes stationary like any regular tower, but with enough resources and expertise, a salvaged rookery can be made operational again. The difficulty of repairing a damaged rookery makes rulers very protective of these prized siege engines, so it is typical for a squad of soldiers to accompany a clockwork rookery into the field.

Built for Civilization: A cadre of artificers and clerics devoted to Erathis, goddess of civilization, created the first clockwork rookeries to expand the civilized domains in the aftermath of Nerath's fall. A clockwork rookery has only the faintest trace of sentience, so it needs a crew to direct and maintain it. In addition to its magical mechanisms and the supplies its crew requires, a rookery usually carries ladders, planks, ropes, and grappling hooks for use in a siege.

Roving Sentry Towers: As design of the rookeries progressed, their primary use shifted from siege toward securing dangerous borders. In particular, a lord who can afford a clockwork rookery may send it to reinforce a garrison until a permanent fortification can be built. As an added benefit, the spiritual rooks of a clockwork rookery can carry messages as a homing bird might.

CLOCKWORK ROOKERIES IN EBERRON

In the Eberron® setting, House Cannith's skilled artificers create clockwork rookeries—fortifications related to the floating fortress of Argonth. The forces of Breland and Aundair frequently field such towers. Warforged usually make up the crew of a Brelish clockwork rookery.

A variant of the clockwork rookery is the bone belfry, which the forces of Karrnath use. Undead troopers man the Karrnathi belfries, and the *harrier rooks* are shadowy bats. Some belfries fire bolts of necrotic energy rather than arbalest bolts.

Clockwork Rookery	**Level 15 Solo Brute**
Gargantuan natural animate (construct)	XP 6,000
HP 600; **Bloodied** 300	**Initiative** +7
AC 27, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 27	**Perception** +12
Speed 6	All-around vision
Immune disease, poison	
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2	
Traits	
☼ **Harrier Rooks ✦ Aura** 5	
The aura is lightly obscured to enemies.	
All-Around Vision	
Enemies can't gain combat advantage by flanking the rookery.	
Juggernaut	
The rookery ignores difficult terrain and provokes no opportunity attacks. It cannot squeeze or grab.	
Instinctive Warfare	
A rookery that starts its turn dominated ignores the condition long enough to use *trample* as a free action. A rookery that starts its turn stunned ignores the condition long enough to use *arbalest volley* as a free action.	
Living Vehicle	
Creatures can enter the rookery's space by climbing onto it (DC 20) or moving through any of its entrances (one at the base and one on top). Creatures in the rookery's space move with the rookery as if it were a vehicle.	
Standard Actions	
✧ **Arbalest Volley** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Close burst 20 (enemies in the burst); +20 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 + 7 damage.	
Move Actions	
ǂ **Trample ✦ At-Will** (1/round)	
Effect: The rookery moves up to its speed and can move through enemies' spaces during the move. Each time the rookery enters an enemy's space for the first time during the move, it makes the following attack against that enemy. Enemies already in the rookery's space when it uses this power cannot be targets of the power.	
Attack: Melee 0 (enemy in the space); +18 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d12 + 7 damage, and the target falls prone.	
Miss: The rookery slides the target up to 4 squares to a square adjacent to the rookery.	
Str 25 (+14) **Dex** 10 (+7) **Wis** 20 (+12)	
Con 22 (+13) **Int** 4 (+4) **Cha** 5 (+4)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** understands Common	

Infernal Embassy

Few war machines inspired greater fear in the hearts of the dragonborn of old than an infernal embassy. These enormous, flying tetrahedrons bear the fiery mark of Asmodeus upon their faces, heralding not only physical destruction, but also corruption of the soul.

Portals to the Nine Hells: An infernal embassy isn't exactly a building. A more accurate description would be that it is a living portal containing a rip in reality that leads straight into the Nine Hells. Once summoned, the embassy relies on conflict to bring forth more devil legionnaires, increasing the hold of the Nine Hells upon the world as long as enemy forces exist to fight. The embassy is a one-way portal, so devils brought to the Material Plane are stranded here. Having nothing to lose, they fight as zealots.

When an infernal embassy is destroyed, it collapses in upon itself, leaving no trace behind aside from a lingering evil that can taint the immediate area for generations.

Legacy of Bael Turath: Only an extremely difficult and bloody ritual known to a select few of Bael Turath's leaders can bring one of these edifices to the

natural world. Rumor holds that the Grandmaster of the Iron Circle is scouring the former holdings of Bael Turath in search of this ritual. If the secret of the infernal embassies falls into the hands of the Iron Circle's forces, they might become unstoppable.

Infernal Embassy **Level 22 Solo Artillery**
Huge immortal animate (construct) XP 20,750

HP 840; **Bloodied** 420 **Initiative** +18
AC 36, **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 33 **Perception** +18
Speed 4, fly 4 All-around vision, blindsight 10
Immune disease, dominated, poison; **Resist** 15 cold, 15 fire
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2

Traits

☼ **Baleful Presence** (fire) ✦ **Aura 5**
Enemies in the aura take a –2 penalty to saving throws. Devil allies that drop to 0 hit points in the aura explode, dealing each creature adjacent to the devil 15 fire damage.

Action Recovery
Whenever the embassy ends its turn, any dazing or stunning effect on the embassy ends.

All-Around Vision
Enemies can't gain combat advantage by flanking the embassy.

Juggernaut
The embassy ignores difficult terrain and provokes no opportunity attacks. It cannot squeeze or grab.

Living Vehicle
Creatures can enter the embassy's space by climbing onto it (DC 20). Creatures in the embassy's space move with the embassy as if it were a vehicle.

Standard Actions

✲ **Hellish Meteor** (fire, force) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Area 2 within 20 (creatures in the burst); +25 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d12 + 18 fire and force damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Four legion devil legionnaires appear in unoccupied squares in the area and act immediately after the embassy in the initiative order.

Str 20 (+16) **Dex** 24 (+18) **Wis** 24 (+18)
Con 26 (+19) **Int** 6 (+9) **Cha** 6 (+9)
Alignment evil **Languages** understands all

Legion Devil Legionnaire **Level 21 Minion Soldier**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 800 each

HP 1, a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +13
AC 37, **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 32 **Perception** +11
Speed 7, teleport 3 Darkvision
Resist 15 fire

Traits

Squad Defense
The legionnaire gains a +2 bonus to all defenses while it is adjacent to at least one other legion devil.

Standard Actions

⨁ **Longsword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); + 26 vs. AC
Hit: 14 damage.

Str 14 (+12) **Dex** 12 (+11) **Wis** 12 (+11)
Con 14 (+12) **Int** 10 (+10) **Cha** 12 (+11)
Alignment evil **Languages** Supernal
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, longsword

Predator Chariot

Goblins are consummate beastmasters who breed animals and monsters for their vile purposes. One such experiment warped steel predators into living vehicles known as predator chariots. The chariot consists of an enclosed carriage with two doors that its crew can bar from the inside. The carriage has two arrow slits, plus space for warriors to ride atop it.

Inspired by War: According to hobgoblin warcasters, the first predator chariots were created deep within the Chernoggar breeding pits in honor of Bane. Specially bred steel predators, stunted by magic and tinkering, were attached to metal carriages covered in vile runes. Their chariots turned out to be far more maneuverable than any similar, horse-drawn vehicle.

A Predator's Mind: The steel predator is only faintly aware of the predator chariot to which it is attached. Constant handling is needed to keep the chariot in line. If left unattended for too long, it begins to act like a savage beast.

Predator Chariot **Level 16 Elite Soldier**
Huge immortal animate (construct) XP 2,800

HP 320; **Bloodied** 160 **Initiative** +15
AC 32, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 27 **Perception** +12
Speed 7 Darkvision
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Juggernaut
The chariot ignores difficult terrain and provokes no opportunity attacks. It cannot squeeze or grab.

Living Vehicle
Creatures can enter the chariot's space by climbing onto it (DC 15) or entering through one of its two doors (one on each side). Creatures in the chariot's space move with the chariot as if it were a vehicle.

Standard Actions

⨁ **Slashing Fury** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 7 damage, and the target falls prone.

⨁ **Predatory Dash** ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The chariot moves up to its speed. Each time the chariot moves adjacent to an enemy for the first time during the move, it makes a *slashing fury* attack against that enemy.

✧ **Resonant Roar** (thunder) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⚅ or if the chariot takes lightning or thunder damage
Attack: Close burst 3 (creatures in the burst but not in the chariot's space); +19 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8 + 15 thunder damage, and the target is deafened and dazed (save ends both).

Str 24 (+15) **Dex** 21 (+13) **Wis** 19 (+12)
Con 24 (+15) **Int** 8 (+7) **Cha** 6 (+6)
Alignment evil **Languages** understands Goblin

War Willow Treant

A few treants agree to carry allies into battle. Regardless of the type of tree it resembles, such a treant is called a war willow.

Blood-Rooted: War willows root near humanoid and elven villages. They prefer the elves, who treat them as honorary elders.

Sylvan Team: A war willow develops strong rapport with the soldiers who ride into war among its branches. Most are masters of ranged attacks.

War Willow Treant	Level 17 Elite Soldier
Huge fey magical beast (plant)	XP 3,200
HP 336; **Bloodied** 168	**Initiative** +11
AC 33, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 28	**Perception** +15
Speed 8 (forest walk)	Low-light vision
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	

Traits

☼ Wrathful Roots ✦ Aura 3
The aura is difficult terrain for nonflying enemies. Enemies must make a DC 23 Acrobatics or Athletics check to stand up in the aura.

Living Vehicle
Creatures can enter the treant's space by climbing onto it (DC 15). Creatures in the treant's space move with the treant as if it were a vehicle.

Threatening Reach
The treant can make opportunity attacks against enemies within 3 squares of it.

Wooden Body
Whenever the treant takes fire damage, it also takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Standard Actions

⊕ Slam ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +22 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 16 damage, the treant slides the target up to 2 squares, and the target falls prone.

⸸ Trample ✦ At-Will
Effect: The treant moves up to its speed and can move through enemies' spaces during the move. Each time the treant enters an enemy's space for the first time during the move, the treant makes a *slam* attack against that enemy.

Str 26 (+16)	**Dex** 12 (+9)	**Wis** 25 (+15)
Con 24 (+15)	**Int** 14 (+10)	**Cha** 10 (+8)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven

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Claudio Pozas is a freelance artist and writer whose recent design credits include *Heroes of Shadow*™, *Heroes of the Feywild*™, and many contributions to *Dragon*. He lives in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with his wife, Paula; his son, Daniel; and his pet dire tiger, Tyler.

FORGOTTEN REALMS®

ED GREENWOOD'S
Eye on the Realms

Clan Harhund and Dead Dwarf Mine

By Ed Greenwood

Illustration by Beth Trott

A tavernmaster in the city of Saradush who was enlarging his wine cellar just made a grisly discovery. He unintentionally broke into the cellar of a vacant tallhouse next door, whose longtime tenants had just departed (hurriedly and without warning), and stumbled on the possible cause of their flight: the rotting, bloated body of a recently murdered dwarf, face down in the cellar with a row of three daggers driven quillons deep into his spine.

The dwarf was a local adventurer, long ridiculed because of his dogged quest for the lost mine of the extinct Harhund dwarf clan—but on his body was proof that he found the mine, and that it contains riches many may desire.

Jorlthro Malankh, Dwarf Adventurer

The dead individual found in the cellar was known as Jorlthro Malankh, a young, energetic, restless local dwarf born somewhere in the mountains around Tethyr, and long a resident of Saradush. Not known to have any living close kin, Jorlthro has always claimed to belong to the Malankh family, dwarves scattered throughout cities and market towns across Amn and Tethyr working as traders and metalcrafters.[1] He further claimed that the Malankh family is descended from the "fallen clan" of Harhund, never-numerous dwarves who formerly dwelt in and under the lands immediately west of the Vilhon Reach. The last Harhund holds there were Hundelve and Irthgarl, and both were found abandoned in the 1320s DR.[2] Irthgarl showed clear evidence of having been violently overrun by goblins.

Other Malankh dwarves, such as the chestmaker Orlo Malankh of Crimmor and the manymetals caster Keldorl Malankh of Athkatla, support these claims, recalling that their own now-dead parents considered themselves Harhund dwarves (and "Malankh" was used merely as a branch name, denoting descendants of Malankhar Harhund).

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Jorlthro Malankh came to Saradush alone, apprenticed himself to a maker of sheaths and scabbards as a dresser,[3] and acquired a reputation as a fast and capable worker who all too often disappeared for a few days, or as much as a tenday, on what he called "adventures."

It's known that Jorlthro first fell in with a local human and halfling adventuring band known as the Farblades, who were shattered in a disastrous expedition in the spring of 1341 DR, when they blundered into a rendezvous between beholders and unsavory human traders and brigands serving those eye tyrants, deep in a wilderness ruin. Jorlthro was one of only three survivors, out of the dozen-some Farblades.

Jorlthro next tried to form his own adventuring band, the Bold Delvers, a handful of treasure-seekers and wandering blades gleaned from the taverns of Saradush, but treachery over the division of the meager spoils of their first foray led to the Delvers battling each other through the alleys of Saradush in a nasty feud that ended only when all the Delvers except Jorlthro were dead or fled from the city. Jorlthro promptly joined the Kickers of the Duke's Teeth, a newly arrived Tethyrian band of rogues, murderers, and ale-lovers who stole every coin they could find in Saradush until exasperated wealthy citizens hired mercenaries to exterminate them. Jorlthro escaped death because he was abed with a broken leg, and when he could walk again, he loudly protested that he had renounced his membership "months aback."

Jorlthro's ill luck continued, as one adventuring band after another that he joined got badly bloodied during their expeditions[4]—though most folk in Saradush would say the dwarf had "shining-good luck" rather than bad fortune, because time and again he survived these debacles.

Jorlthro's last foray was with Baerizaun's Banners, a newly formed, motley band of novice adventurers and semi-retired pirates hailing from Velen who got embroiled in a war between monster-smuggling merchants trying to establish a way-hold in Saradush, and The Daggerfingers, a gang of brigands relocating from the Vilhon Reach to the city. The Banners were swiftly reduced to Jorlthro and a hedge-wizard calling herself Ornarnla "Firehands," and both had to go into hiding as the Daggerfingers hunted them tirelessly through the city.

Ornarnla dropped out of sight, but it seems the Daggerfingers caught up with Jorlthro, because three daggers driven through the spine is their signature way of slaying, when they want to leave an example to others (in this case, probably the occupants of the tall-house where Jorlthro's body was found).

All this lore about Jorlthro Malankh was provided to the authorities of Saradush by a sage of the city hight Glaspaero Vhallamond, who befriended Jorlthro some years back.[5]

Saradush is a busy crossroads trading city of rumors and broken secrets, and it didn't take long after the discovery of the dwarf's body for word to leak out that although Jorlthro's coin purse had been taken (presumably by his murderers), magical gems were found on his body—as well as the murdered dwarf's diary, detailing where treasure was hidden! To locals, the most sensational news was that Jorlthro had evidently found the gems in the Hardhammer Mine, legendary for being "right underneath" Saradush and for being roamed by deadly monsters—and widely held to be the tomb of the last Harhunds.

Vhallamond confirms that Harhund dwarves carved out the Hardhammer Mine (named for the unusually hard stone that had to be worked, and that Saradush stands on), that they fought many monsters of the Underdark down the years they held the mine, and that in the end they had to depart it hastily—but he suspects few dwarves died there, that none are formally entombed there, and that the dwarves who left were by no means the last Harhunds.

An anonymous source (almost certainly a member of the Guard of Saradush, its police force) says that Jorlthro's diary is a tiny, slender book full of brief, cryptic entries—in Thorass or Common, not a runic script—rather than detailed accounts coherent to any reader. The diary appears to contain coded directions to treasure caches established by Jorlthro and the ill-fated adventuring bands he belonged to.

Other sources say that Jorlthro's codpiece was stuffed with enchanted gems. Both the Guard and Vhallamond have refused to confirm this specific fact, but done so in words that suggest the dead dwarf was indeed carrying magical gems.

No one will comment on rumors that the Daggerfingers are lurking to pounce on anyone who follows the diary's directions and braves traps to recover the loot hidden by the various ill-fated adventuring bands Jorlthro belonged to.[6]

Jorlthro's Jewels

It seems someone in the Guard of Saradush owed Elminster a favor—or had a weakness that the Sage of Shadowdale didn't hesitate to exploit. According to a report Elminster perused (without anyone in Saradush officially being aware of his doing so), the following gems were found in Jorlthro's codpiece, all of them mounted in sturdy—rather than decorative—neck-chain fittings: two *bloodgem shards*, a *hero stone*, a *stalwart stone*, and three *kindlestones*.

- A *bloodgem shard*[7] is a blood-red crystal that absorbs the life force of defeated foes to (briefly) magically augment its wearer.
- A *hero stone* is any heat-treated gem that has been augmented by a master forger and a spellcaster to give it the powers of a *dauntless champion's ring*.[8]
- A *stalwart stone* is a heat- and magic-treated gemstone, usually a moonstone or a whitish translucent gem that, when worn, lessens damage.[9]

- A *kindlestone* may be any sort of igneous stone or crystal (gem). When grasped and ordered, it causes flames to appear in the air immediately around it. These flames are cool to the touch, and the stone itself remains so at all times, but the flames can ignite anything a fire hot enough for brisk cooking could, and the fire they cause will become and remain intensely hot so long as it has handy fuel, and can be used for forging. The same words that ordered it to activate can be used by anyone close to such a stone, not just the activator, to turn it off, though the fire it created will burn as long as fuel is available.

What is most interesting about these gems is that Jorlthro's diary clearly states each was found in an upper passage of the Hardhammer Mine, "just beneath the cellars of present-day Saradush." It seems the departing Harhund dwarves filled these passages with wet clay (that over the years since has become rock-hard), encasing the gems in widely separated locations—and that the end faces of these clay in-fills were graven with runes that translate as "Magic Gone Wild. Stay Away Unless Desperately Needed."

All this may have something to do with an old dwarven tale Elminster recalls, about illithids mastering a way to "improve" gemstones mined by dwarves and enchanted by elves (in return for a share in the gems), changing them from magics that just aided wearers to effects that aided and allowed a far-off illithid master to influence or even firmly control the minds of wearers.

Hardhammer Mine

The Harhund dwarves are believed to have begun carving out the Hardhammer Mine in the 660s DR, following veins of very pure, abundant silver in a cap (uppermost rock layer between the Underdark and the surface Realms) so hard that it had been little tunneled before then.

The veins are mainly vertical, and exist as horizontally thin (narrow), curving snakes.[10] They underlie what is now the city of Saradush, a crossroads trading center that expanded greatly in the latter 1300s, and the uppermost chambers of the mine are mere feet beneath the floors of the deepest city cellars.

The silver was worked out by the late 880s, proving so rich and abundant that it enabled some of the Harhunds to resettle and live well among humans in the growing mercantile centers that are now Athkatla and the other wealthy cities of Amn and northern Tethyr. Though the hard rock made the passages and caverns stable and therefore always a good home to someone, the Harhunds tired of fighting off constant intruders from the deeper Underdark (various monsters, and both drow and illithids seeking a secure surface connection in the area), and gradually abandoned Hardhammer.

The doomstroke[11] came when someone—dwarven rumors say an illithid skilled in the Art—found a way to turn the magic borne by gems worn by senior Harhund dwarves against their wearers, slaying those dwarves or turning them against their fellows.

The surviving Harhunds entombed the gems in clay and fled to elsewhere in the Realms, leaving Hardhammer Mine to prowling monsters, the boldest cellar-enlargers of modern Saradush (often smugglers, fences of stolen goods, cultists, and other evildoers), and ever wilder legend.

Until, that is, Jarlthro Malankh started chipping away at the hardened clay to find the gems. He almost certainly had the help of Ornarnla (whom Elminster suspects found more magic than she shared with Jarlthro), and of some hirelings who, unknown to the dwarf, were members of a recently founded local beholder cult.[12]

Elminster doesn't believe that Jarlthro managed to excavate much of the hardened clay before being murdered. Presumably the Daggerfingers and the beholder cultists are now warring with each other for control of what hasn't yet been dug out—with citizens of Saradush whose cellars impinge on the hardened clay soon to be caught in the middle.

Some novice adventurers newly arrived in Saradush are eager to explore what the citizens (amid the buzz of lively rumors) have now redubbed "Dead Dwarf Mine," so Elminster expects further mayhem.

Harhund's History

The founding of Clan Harhund has been lost to passing time, like the histories of so many minor dwarven houses. It certainly existed by 338 DR, when the Harhunds negotiated a trading pact with Clan Rivenforge, but its members have never been numerous or powerful. It has, however, always been widely scattered across (and mainly beneath) western Faerûn, so it can't be deemed near-extinct with any certainty. The Malankh family is not the only surviving branch; others include dwarves of the Tashalar with the surname Thultaun, and dwarves of Chessenta who call themselves House Hundalar.

Clan Harhund's rune or symbol could be described as a capital letter "K" of our real-world English script, its arms down and its long "back" uppermost but horizontal, with an arc joining both ends of that line in a half circle atop it.

Except among themselves, few Harhund dwarves are anything near famous or even memorable. One of the few who could be considered so is Yeldur Harhund, known as the "Haunted Beard" because of a magical curse cast upon his hair that swirled about him in battle as a bright, pulsing glow. This feature made stealth impossible, but apparently deflected some magics and prolonged his vigor. He was young in the 340s DR, and is thought to still be alive, somewhere far east and south of Faerûn's Sword Coast.

Among dwarves, legend and current gossip both agree that Harhund dwarves are hardy and intrepid explorers of the Underdark, tirelessly exploring the deep places beneath the earth to find new veins of

ore, establish new and well-hidden Harhund strongholds, and when they need funds, hiring themselves out as expert Underdark guides. Weapons at the ready, Harhund dwarves stalk the tunnels of the Realms Below every day.

Elminster has heard of a local legend in westernmost Impiltur that mentions a "Harhund little man" (presumably a dwarf) who will "rise from enspelled sleep" if a certain now-ruined castle is rebuilt. He has no idea if this is mere fancy, or a reminder of a Harhund dwarf trapped in magical stasis in or near the castle, or something stranger.

What is fairly certain is that the unfortunate Jarlthro Malankh was the last Harhund dwarf in Saradush . . . for now.

Notes

1. "Metalcrafters" is a Heartlands term for smiths who make and repair small daily items, inlays and chest fittings, and jewelry settings.

2. The discoveries were made by various exploring adventurers, notably the Six Swords of Arrabar and the all-female, mixed-race Blackened Helms of Tashluta.

3. A "dresser" is a maker and fitter of ornamental metals—buckles, loops, stop-heads, hooks, clips, grommets, and mere ornaments—to scabbards, sheaths, pouches, and the belts they ride upon. The maker Jorlthro Malankh apprenticed to was Irynthal Wimmerstone, of the long-established Wimmerstone gnome family, makers of tool and weapon sharpeners, containers, and "harnesses" (belts and such).

4. These groups included the Stormswords, of Starmantle; the Adventures Arising, out of Crimmor; and Landeluck's Doomarrow, of Selgaunt, among other lesser-known, shorter-lived ones. All three of these bands went too deep into the Underdark, in various places in the Heartlands.

5. Glaspaero Vhallamond of Maerhuld Street in southern Saradush is a quiet, nondescript, rather homely man with an unruly thatch of blond hair that sticks out straight in all directions. He specializes in local history and genealogy, with a sideline in locally known magic items, and is fond of Tashlutan wines and all sorts of spicy foods.

6. Except Elminster, who said flatly, "Of *course* they are." He warns that although the Daggerfingers seem to be a formidable array of veteran human evildoers, more than one is actually another sort of creature seeming to be human by means of magical disguises.

7. Found in *Adventurer's Vault*™ 2.

8. Found in *Adventurer's Vault* 2.

9. Whenever any attack would harm the wearer of a *stalwart stone*, three attack rolls must be made, and the lowest-damage result is the one that applies.

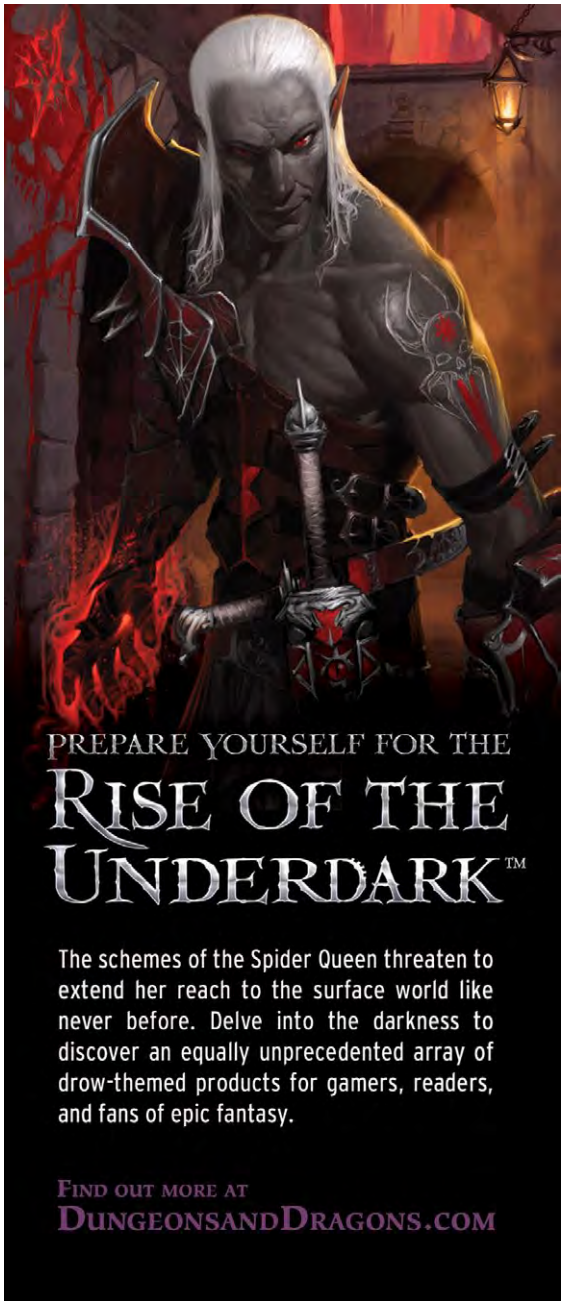
10. Faerûnian miners call veins "snakes" when, after being dug out, they would leave cavities or passages an observer hovering above them and looking down could see as having the shapes of giant undulating serpents.

11. "Doomstroke" is local (eastern Amn and Tethyr, western Vilhon, and spreading steadily thanks to traveling merchants) slang for what we might call "the last straw."

12. This cult, which calls itself the Faithful of Xarlhoun, worships—and serves, in various acts of covert villainy—a very real beholder lurking under Saradush, that calls itself Xarlhoun. Elminster suspects this to be an alias used by a young, small, and weak eye tyrant that fled the beholder battles for dominance in Undermountain and the Underdark near Waterdeep.

About the Author

Ed Greenwood is the man who unleashed the Forgotten Realms® setting on an unsuspecting world. He works in libraries, plus he writes fantasy, science fiction, horror, mystery, and romance stories (sometimes all in the same novel), but he is happiest when churning out Realmslore, Realmslore, and more Realmslore. He still has a few rooms in his house in which he has space left to pile up papers.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